

Ricardo De Mambro Santos

Holy Beauty

Northern Renaissance Prints
and the Making of the Hexham Abbey Bible
(Cambridge, 1629)



Hallie Ford Museum of Art
Mario Adda Editore

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*With an essay by Bruce T. Martin
and contributions by Olivia Barry and Virginia van Dine*

Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem (Oregon)
Mario Adda Editore, Bari (Italy)

Holy Beauty.
Northern Renaissance Prints Discovered
in an Early English Book
February 10 to April 29, 2018
Exhibition at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art
(Willamette University, Salem, OR)

Curator: Ricardo De Mambro Santos

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The Hexham Abbey Bible as well as the engravings displayed in the exhibition *Holy Beauty* belong to Bruce T. Martin, founder of Historic Bibles & Engravings (www.historicbibles.com).

Photo credit

Dale Peterson (for all reproductions from the Hexham Abbey Bible)

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Ricardo De Mambro Santos

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Introduction

THE
BOOK OF
COMMON
PRAYER,
AND
ADMINISTRATION
OF THE
SACRAMENTS:
AND
OTHER RITES AND
CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND, WITH THE
PSALTER OR PSALMES
OF DAVID.



PRINTED BY THOMAS AND JOHN BUCK,
Printers to the Univerſitie of CAMBRIDGE.
ANNO DOM. MDCLXXIX.

1. Title Page of *The Book of Common Prayer*, printed by Thomas and John Buck in Cambridge, England, 1629 (*Hexham Abbey Bible*). Albany (OR), Collection of Historic Bibles & Engravings

Touching Heavens.

Art, Religiosity, and Didactic Aims in the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

Ricardo De Mambro Santos

Faith is to believe what you do not see;
the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.
St Augustine, *De verbis Apostoli*, Sermo 27

1. Introduction.

Remarks on a Newly Discovered *Corpus* of Prints in the Hexham Bible

The exhibition *Holy Beauty* presents, for the first time, a unique exemplar of *The Book of Common Prayer and The New Testament* (ill. 1), published in Cambridge, England, in 1629, characterized by a most peculiar feature: interpolated with the pages of the Sacred Scriptures, this volume contains over 110 full-page engravings, from different series and sources, strategically arranged in the attempt to establish a dialogue with the biblical text.¹ In other words, this is not an illustrated book, but a book *with* illustrations (ills. 2-3) or a “Picture Book,” as we shall explain better in the next paragraphs.² Carved in a technique known as burin by a group of renowned sixteenth-century Dutch and Flemish masters, the prints displayed in this volume were produced mainly between 1582 and 1585, that is to say, many decades before the publication of the book.³ Only later, between 1643 and 1662, as it will be argued, they were inserted into the Bible and eventually bound together, creating what could be called an extraordinary “Museum of Sacred Prints.”

Shortly after the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg, around 1450s, book publishers generally commissioned woodcuts to be included in Bibles that were intended to be illustrated.⁴ Before

the second half of the sixteenth century, the use of engravings as book illustrations was still very rare. The situation changed somewhat at mid-century, partly due to the establishment, in cities such as Antwerp and Amsterdam, of many printing-publishing houses, mostly specialized, however, in the production of independent series of engravings.⁵

The book displayed in this exhibition constitutes, therefore, a truly exceptional object, for it contains many different print series originally carved and sold as autonomous *corpus* of images, designed with the aim of providing visual translations of particular biblical passages or allegorical narratives with moral lessons. Only subsequently were these prints incorporated within this book and bound together, becoming, then, an integral part of it. Strategically combined with the text, these images were used to illustrate, for instance, relevant paragraphs from the *Gospel according to St Matthew* (ill. 4), the *Gospel according to St Mark* (ill. 5), the *Gospel according to St Luke* (ill. 6), the *Gospel according to St John* (ill. 7), and also pages from the *Acts of the Apostles* (ill. 8).

In addition to their illustrative value, the prints collected in this Bible present also significant features from a compositional, technical, and conceptual standpoint and count, among the various designers, engravers, and publishers involved in their making, names of the caliber of Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574), Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570),

Of almes, prayer, and fasting. S. MATTHEW. To avoid worldly cares.

674

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compell thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Deut. 15. 8.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and * from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

Lev. 19. 18.

43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, * Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy :

Luk. 6. 27.

44 But I say unto you, * Love your enemies, blisse them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray * for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you :

Luk. 11. 34.

Mat. 7. 40.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sunne to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Luk. 6. 32.

46 * For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicanes the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren onely, what do you more *then others*? do not even the Publicanes so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

CHAP. VI.

1 Christ continueth his sermon in the mount, speaking of almes, 5 prayer, 14 forgiving our brethren, 16 fasting, 19 where our treasure is to be laid up, 21 of serving God and mammon: 25 exhorteth not to be carefull for worldly things; 33 how to seek Gods kingdom.

TAKE heed that ye do not your almes before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

¶ Or, with.
* Rom. 12. 8.
¶ Or, care not
as trumpet to be
founded.

1 Therefore, * when thou doest thine almes, do not found a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

2 But when thou doest almes, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth :

3 That thine almes may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

4 ¶ And when thou praieest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

5 But thou when thou praieest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy doore, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Eccles. 7. 24.

6 But when ye pray, use not vain * repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

7 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Luk. 11. 2.

8 After this manner therefore pray ye: * Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

9 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

10 Give us this day our daily bread.

11 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

12 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Mat. 11. 25.

13 ¶ For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

14 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

15 ¶ Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face:

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

19 ¶ Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

20 * But lay up for your selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Luk. 12. 33.

1. Tim. 6. 19.

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 * The light of the bodie is the eie: if therefore thine eie be single, thy whole bodie shall be full of light.

Luk. 11. 34.

23 But if thine eie be evil, thy whole bodie shall be full of darknesse. If therefore the light that is in thee be darknesse, how great is that darknesse!

24 ¶ * No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Luk. 16. 13.

25 Therefore I say unto you, * Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your bodie what ye shall put on: is not the life more then meat, and the bodie then raiment?

Psal. 55. 22.

Luk. 12. 22.

1. Pet. 5. 7.

26 Behold the fowls of the aire: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better then they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can adde one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

29 And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glorie, was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore if God so clothe the graffe of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithall shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itselfe: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

CHAP. VII.

1 Christ ending his sermon in the mount, exproveheth rash judgement, 6 forbiddeth to cast holy things to dogs, 9 exhorteth to prayer, 13 to overcome at the strait gate, 15 to beware of false prophets, 21 not to be hearers, but doers of the words: 24 the commandment to do as we would be done by, 26 and not on the face.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged.

Luk. 6. 37.

1 For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: * and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Rom. 2. 1.

Mat. 9. 12.

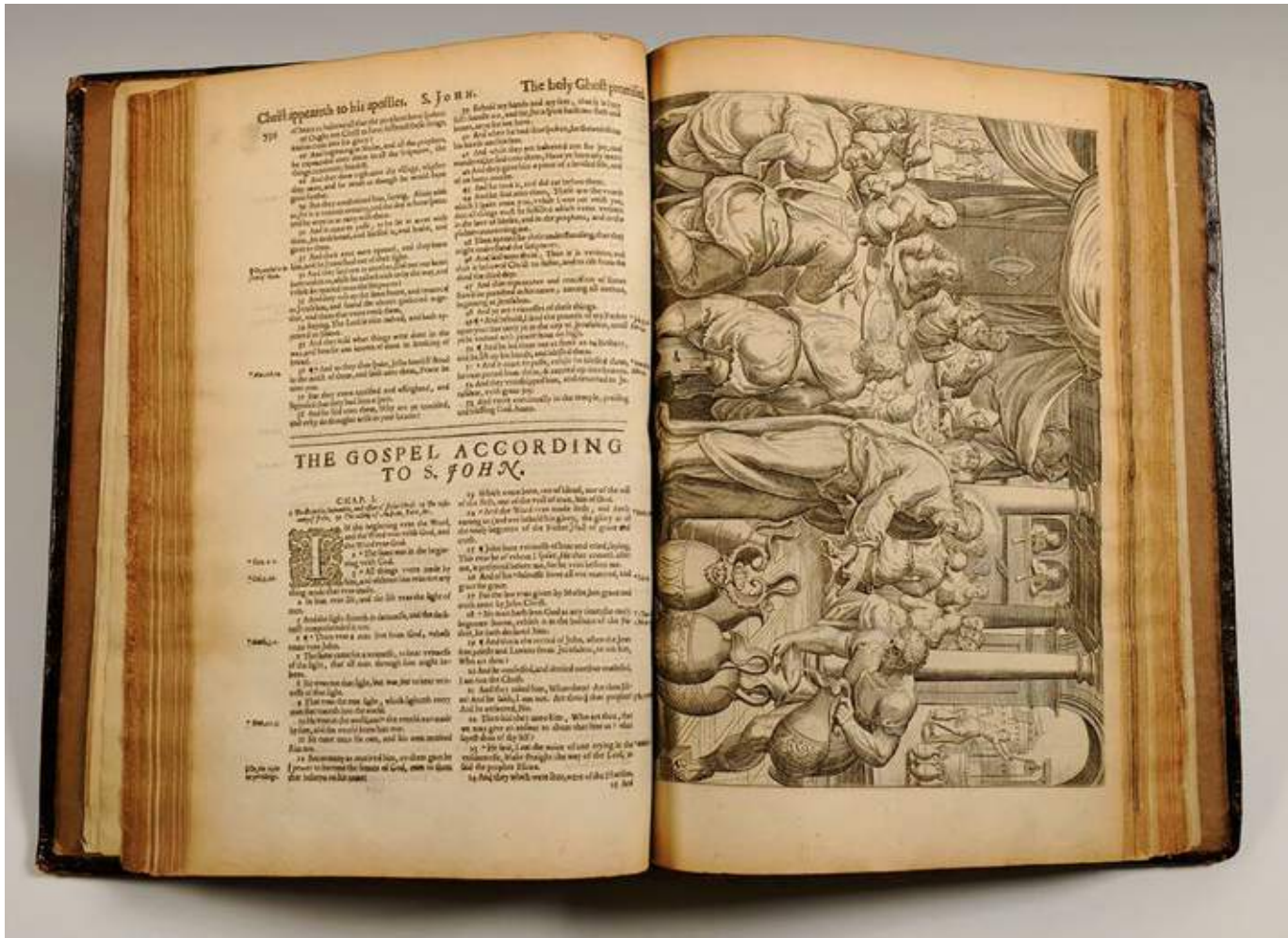
Luk. 6. 38.

2 ¶ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brothers eie, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eie?

3 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eie; and behold, a beam is in thine own eie?

4 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eie; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brothers eie.

5 ¶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,



3. Hexham Abbey Bible, foll. 730-731

Philips Galle (1537-1612), Jan Sadeler (1550-1600), and Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617).

That is not to say, however, that the “aesthetic” qualities of these engravings – to use an anachronistic term in reference to the time when this Bible was compiled⁶ – might have been the main criteria with which they had been bought and, then, inserted into the book. If anything, the opposite appears to be true: the images were probably chosen, in fact, in strict subordination to – and as clear, instructive illustrations of – the biblical text. This method of selection is confirmed by the fact that the same composition – such as the *Crucifixion with the Penitent St*

Peter engraved by Hans Collaert – was purchased in different states (one published by Gerard de Jode in 1585, within the *Novi Testamenti, in templo gestorum icones tredecim elegantissimi ac ornatissimi*; the second by Claes Jansz Visscher in 1639 as part of the *Theatrum Biblicum hoc est Historiae sacrae Veteris et Novi Testamenti tabulis aeneis expressae*) and included twice in the volume in order to illustrate the same biblical narrative according to different Gospels, namely, the one written by St Matthew (ill. 9) and by St Luke (ill. 10). It is evident, therefore, that these images were chosen and acquired primarily to perform the illustrative goal that they were expected to fulfill.



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. MATTHEW.

CHAP. I.

The genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph. 11 He was conceived by the holy Ghost, and late of the virgin Mary, who was espoused to Joseph. 12 The angel saitheth the mistaking thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of Christ.

* Luk. 1. 35.
* Gen. 11. 31.
* Gen. 25. 26.
* Gen. 29. 35.
* Gen. 31. 37.
* Ruth. 4. 17.
* 1. Chron. 2. 5.
* 1. Sam. 16. 1.
* 2. Sam. 12. 24.
* 1. Chron. 3. 10.
* 2. King. 20. 22.
* 1. Chron. 3. 17.
Some read, *Joseph begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Israel.*
* 1. Chron. 3. 17.



THE Book of the generation of JESUS CHRIST, the sonne of David, the sonne of Abraham.

1 * Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.
2 * And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar, & Phares begat Esrom, and Esrom begat Aram.
3 And Aram begat Aminadab, and Aminadab begat Naasson, and Naasson begat Salmon.
4 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab, and Booz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse.
5 And Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.
6 And Solomon begat Roboam, and Roboam begat Abia, and Abia begat Asa.
7 And Asa begat Josaphat, and Josaphat begat Joram, and Joram begat Ozias.
8 And Ozias begat Joatham, and Joatham begat Achaz, and Achaz begat Ezekias.
9 And Ezekias begat Manasses, and Manasses begat Amon, and Amon begat Josias.
10 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.
11 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel, & Salathiel begat Zorobabel.
12 And Zorobabel begat Abiud, and Abiud begat Eliakim, and Eliakim begat Azor.
13 And Azor begat Sadoc, and Sadoc begat Achim, and Achim begat Eliud.
14 And Eliud begat Eleazar, and Eleazar begat Matthan, and Matthan begat Jacob.
15 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

16 So all the generations from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations: and from David untill the carrying away into Babylon, are fourteen generations: and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ, are fourteen generations.

17 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Marie was espoused to Joseph (before they came together) she was found with childe of the holy Ghost.
18 Then Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing to make her a publicke example, was minded to put her away privily.

19 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou sonne of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her, is of the holy Ghost.

20 And she shall bring forth a sonne, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their finnes.

21 (Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

22 Behold, a virgin shall be with childe, and shall bring forth a sonne, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.)

23 Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

24 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born sonne; and he called his name Jesus.

CHAP. II.

The wise men out of the east, are directed to Christ by a starre. 11 They worship him, and offer their presents. 12 Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with Jesus and his mother: 13 Herod sleeth the child: 14 He is brought back againe into Galilee to Nazareth.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlechem of Judas, in the dayes of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his starre in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlechem of Judas: for thus it is written by the prophet;

6 And thou Bethlechem in the land of Judas art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governour that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the starre appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlechem, and said, Go, and search diligently for the young childe, and when ye have found him, bring me word againe, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed, and lo, the starre which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young childe was.

10 When they saw the starre, they joyced with exceeding great joy.

L II 2

11 ¶ And

4. Hexham Abbey Bible, fol. 671 (Gospel according to St Matthew)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. MARK.

CHAP. I.

*The office of John the Baptist, & Jesus his baptism, & temptations
14 to preacheth: 18 calleth Peter, Andrew, James and
John: 21 healeth one that had a devill, by Peters mother
in law, 22 many other persons: 41 and cleanseth the leper.*



He beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Sonne of God,

1 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

2 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

3 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of finnes.

4 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their finnes.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their finnes.

6 And John was clothed with camels hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loynes: and he did eat locusts and wilde honey:

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier then I after me, the fastet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the holy Ghost.

9 And it came to passe in those dayes, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.

11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Sonne, in whom I am well pleased.

12 And immediately the spirit drived him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness fourtie dayes tempted of Satan, and was with the wilde beasts, and the angels ministered unto him.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdome of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdome of God is at hand: repent ye and beleve the gospel.

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers)

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the sonne of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

21 And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out,

24 Saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, in somuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authoritie commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon, and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simons wifes mother lay sick of a fever: and anon they tell him of her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lift her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32 And at even, when the sunne did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33 And all the time was gathered together at the doore.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

35 And in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

36 And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and said unto him, I will, be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosie departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straightly charged him, and forthwith sent him away,

44 And said unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thy self to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto thee.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the cite, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

* Mal. 3. 1.

* Isa. 40. 3.
* Luke 1. 4.
* John 1. 1. 1.

* Matt. 3. 6.
* Or, 1000.

* Mark. 3. 5.

* Mark. 1. 4.

* Mark. 3. 11.

[Or, eleven, or
1000.

* Mark. 4. 1.

* Mark. 4. 11.

* Mark. 4. 18.

* Mark. 4. 11.

* Mark. 7. 1.

* Luke 4. 11.

* Mark. 8. 14.

[Or, 10, for that
they knew him.

* Mark. 8. 5.

* Luke 9. 15.

5. Hexham Abbey Bible, fol. 693 (Gospel according to St Mark)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. LUKE.

CHAP. I.

*The preface of Luke to his whole gospel. 1 The conception of
Faba the Baptist, 28 and of Christ. 12 The prophesie of
Zachary, and of Mary concerning Christ. 27 The nativity and
circumcision of Jesus by the prophete of Zachary both of Christ,
28 and of John.*

FOrasmuch as many have taken in hand to set
forth in order a declaration of those things
which are most surely believed among us,

1 Even as they delivered them unto us,
which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and
ministers of the word:

2 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect
understanding of all things from the very first, to
write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those
things wherein thou hast been instructed.

5 **H**ere was in the dayes of He-
rod the king of Judaea, a cer-
tain priest named Zacharias,
of the course of Abia; and his
wife was of the daughters of
Aaron, and her name was
Elizabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God,
walking in all the commandments and ordinances
of the Lord, blamelesse.

7 And they had no child, because that Elizabeth
was barren, and they both were now well stricken in
yeares.

8 And it came to passe that while he executed the
priests office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custome of the priests office,
his lot was to burn incense when he went into the
temple of the Lord:

10 * And the whole multitude of the people were
praying without, at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the
Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled,
and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zachari-
as, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall
bear thee a sonne, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladnesse, and many
shall rejoyce at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord,
and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he
shall be filled with the holy Ghost, even from his mo-
thers wombe.

* Mal. 4. 6. 16 * And many of the children of Israel shall he
turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and
power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to
the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of
the just, to make ready a people prepared for the
Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby
shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife
well stricken in yeares.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am
Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am
sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad
tidings.

20 And behold, thou shalt be dumbe, and not able
to speak, until the day that these things shall be per-
formed, because thou beelewest not my words, which
shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and mar-
velled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak un-
to them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision
in the temple: for he beckned unto them, and remain-
ed speechlesse.

23 And it came to passe that as soon as the dayes
of his ministracion were accomplished, he departed to
his own house.

24 And after those dayes his wife Elizabeth con-
ceived, and hid her selfe five moneths, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the dayes
wherin he looked on me, to take away my reproach
among men.

26 And in the sixth moneth, the angel Gabriel
was sent from God, unto a cite of Galilee, named
Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was
Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgins name
was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail
thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, and
blessed art thou among women.

*Or, graciously
accepted, or
most work
See vers. 10.*

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his
saying, and cast in her minde what manner of salu-
tation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for
thou hast found favour with God.

31 * And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy
wombe, and bring forth a sonne, and shalt call
his name Jesus.

* Mt. 1. 21.
Mch. 3. 23.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Sonne
of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him
the throne of his father David.

33 * And he shall reigne over the house of Jacob
for ever, and of his kingdome there shall be no end.

* Dan. 7. 14.
Mic. 4. 7.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this
be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her,
The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power
of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also
that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be
called the Sonne of God.

36 And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also
conceived a sonne in her old age, and this is the
sixth moneth with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the
Lord, be it unto me according to thy word: and the
angel departed from her.

39 And Mary arose in those dayes, and went into
the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda,

40 And entred into the house of Zacharias, and
saluted Elizabeth.

41 And it came to passe that when Elizabeth
heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her
wombe: and Elizabeth was filled with the holy Ghost.

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said,
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the
fruit of thy wombe.

43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of
my Lord should come to me?

44 For lo, alson at the voice of thy salutation
founded in mine eares, the babe leaped in my wombe
for joy.

*Or, as well de-
ceived that there
be*

45 And blessed is she that believed, for there shall
be

6. Hexham Abbey Bible, fol. 707 (Gospel according to St Luke)

730

of heart to beleve all that the prophets have spoken:
 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?
 27 And beginning at Moyses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.
 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone further.
 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is farre spent: and he went in to tarry with them.
 30 And it came to passe, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.
 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight.
 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?
 33 And they rose up the same houre, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,
 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.
 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.
 36 ¶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.
 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

¶ Or, appeared to be seen of them.

¶ Mar. 16. 14.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.
 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.
 41 And while they yet beleaved not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?
 42 And they gave him a peece of a broiled fish, and of an hony-combe.
 43 And he took it, and did eat before them.
 44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moyses, and in the prophets, and in the psalmes concerning me.
 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.
 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
 47 And that repentance and remission of finnes should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
 49 ¶ And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, untill ye be endued with power from on high.
 50 ¶ And he led them out as farre as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands, and blessed them.
 51 ¶ And it came to passe, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, & carried up into heaven.
 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy:
 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

¶ Joh. 15. 26.
 Acts 1. 4.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

¶ Mar. 16. 19.
 Acts 1. 9.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. J O H N.

CHAP. I.

1 The divine, humane, and office of Jesus Christ. 15 The testimony of John. 19 The calling of Andrew, Peter, &c.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
 3 All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.
 6 ¶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.
 8 He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.
 9 That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sonnes of God, even to them that beleve on his name:

¶ Gen. 1. 1.

¶ Col. 1. 16.

¶ Math. 3. 1.

¶ Heb. 11. 17.

¶ Or, the right or privilege.

13 Which were born, not of bloud, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the onely begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.
 15 ¶ John bare witness of him and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me.
 16 And of his fulnesse have all we received, and grace for grace.
 17 For the law was given by Moyses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
 18 No man hath seen God at any time, the onely begotten Sonne, which is in the bosome of the Father, he hath declared him.
 19 ¶ And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou?
 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? what sayest thou of thy self?
 23 He said, I saw the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Elias.
 24 And they which were sent, were of the Pharisees.
 25 And

¶ Math. 1. 16.

¶ Col. 1. 19.

¶ 1. Tim. 6. 16.

¶ Joh. 4. 13.

¶ Or, a prophet.

¶ Math. 3. 3.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAP. I.

1 Christ preparing his apostles to the beholding of his ascension, gathered them together into the mount Olivet, commandeth them to expect in Jerusalem the sending down of the holy Ghost, promised after few dayes to furnish by vertue whereof they should be witness. unto how, even to the utmost parts of the earth. 2 After his ascension they are warned by two angels to depart, and to sit their minds upon his second coming. 3 They accordingly return, and giving themselves to prayer, chose Matthias apostle in the place of Judas.



He former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Untill the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the holy Ghost had given commandements unto the apostles whom he had chosen.

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them fourtie dayes, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdome of God:

4 And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost, not many dayes hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdome to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power after that the holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparell,

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-dayes journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the sonne of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 And in those dayes Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty)

16 Men and brethren, This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem, inasmuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Acceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of psalmes, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: And his bishoprick let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

CHAP. II.

1 The apostles filled with the holy Ghost, and speaking diverse languages, are admired of some, and derided by others. 2 When Peter approving, and shewing that the apostles speak by the power of the holy Ghost, that Jesus was risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, has poured down the same holy Ghost, and was the Messiah, a man known to them to be approved of God by miracles, wonders and signs, and not cruelly abused in determinate counsell, and foreknowledge: 3 he baptizeth a great number that were converted, 4 who afterwards devoutly, and charitably converse together, 5 the apostles working many miracles, and God daily increasing his church.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house wher they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them:

4 And they were all filled with the holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?

8 And how heare we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do heare them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt,

Or, sitting together with them.

Luk. 24. 49. Math. 1. 11.

Chap. 1. 10. the power of the holy Ghost coming upon you.

Luk. 24. 31.

Psal. 41. 9.

Math. 27. 3.

Psal. 69. 15.

Psal. 109. 8. Or, office, or, charge.

Or, wharble voice was made. Or, similes in number.

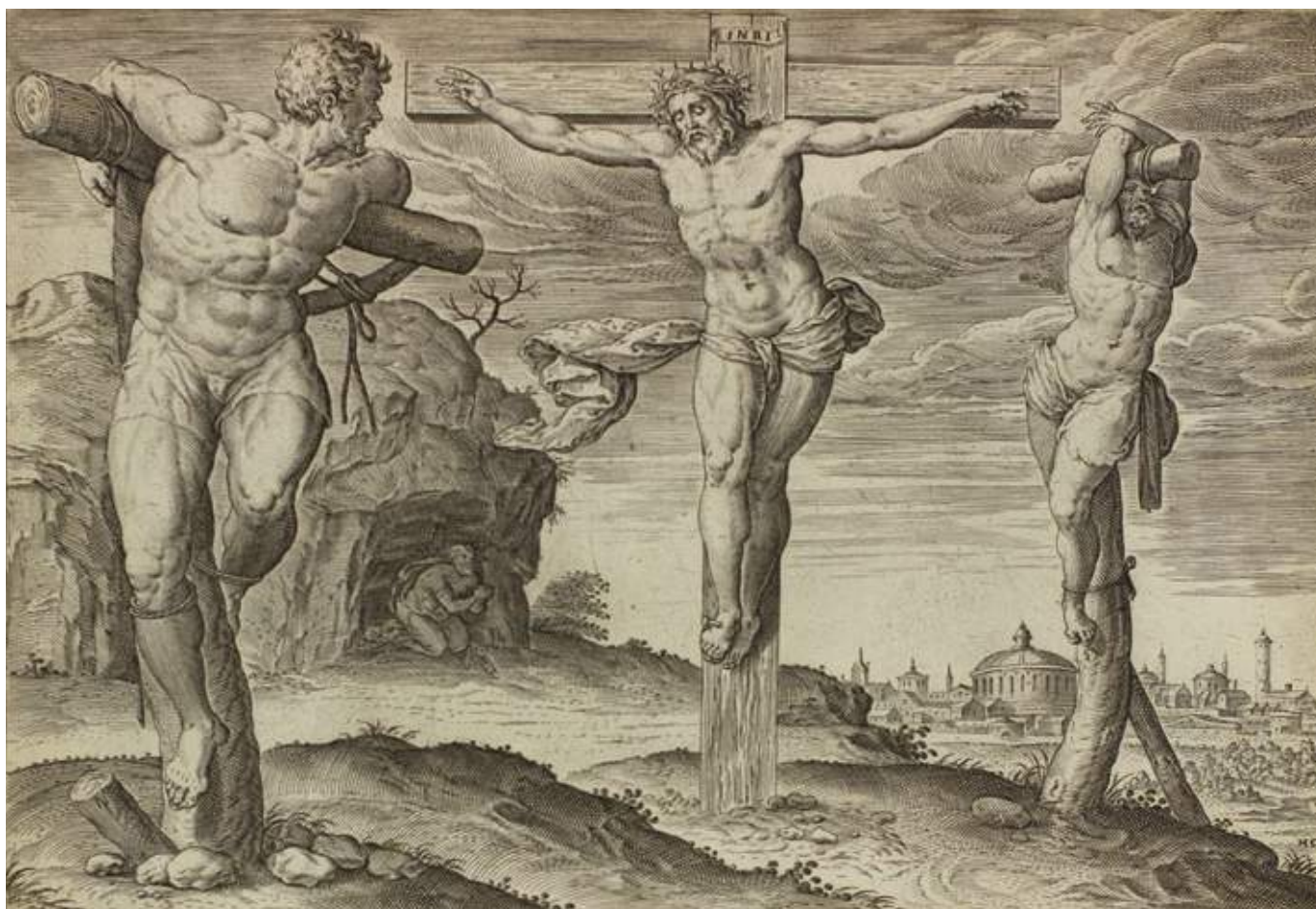
8. Hexham Abbey Bible, fol. 748 (Acts of the Apostles)

Moreover, during the binding process, some of the prints had their edges cut and resized in a rather irregular manner so that their compositions result slightly altered and, in some cases, the inscriptions that used to accompany the engravings appear partly obliterated, if not removed altogether. Had the original compiler of this book a better defined “aesthetic” agenda and more sophisticated artistic concerns in his mind, such a pragmatic and somehow dismissive treatment of the prints would not be justifiable. It would have resulted, in fact, rather unusual among art collectors and print connoisseurs.⁷ In other words, these images were not conceived as collectible items, but, on the contrary, seem to have been acquired and assembled for reasons that did not belong to the sphere of what we could call nowadays “aesthetic directives” and might have responded to other criteria, such as their didactic clarity, textual

adequacy, and compositional immediacy and *decorum*.

Be as it may, examined from a Postmodern lens of analysis, this rare exemplar of the 1629 edition of the *Book of Prayer and the New Testament* shows a complex articulation of artistic qualities, ethic concerns, pedagogical strategies, and religious aspirations profoundly intertwined, as we shall examine in detail in the next pages. For the moment, it suffices to underline the fact that, in a broad sense, the interplay of ethic, aesthetic, and confessional matters was a very relevant theme in sixteenth-century Europe and, as recent scholarship has pointed out, also in other geographical areas.⁸

In the specific case of sixteenth-century prints, etchings, and engravings, since they were composed by iconic elements as well as verbal signs in constant dialogue with each other, it is not surprising to find out that these mediums had become, throughout



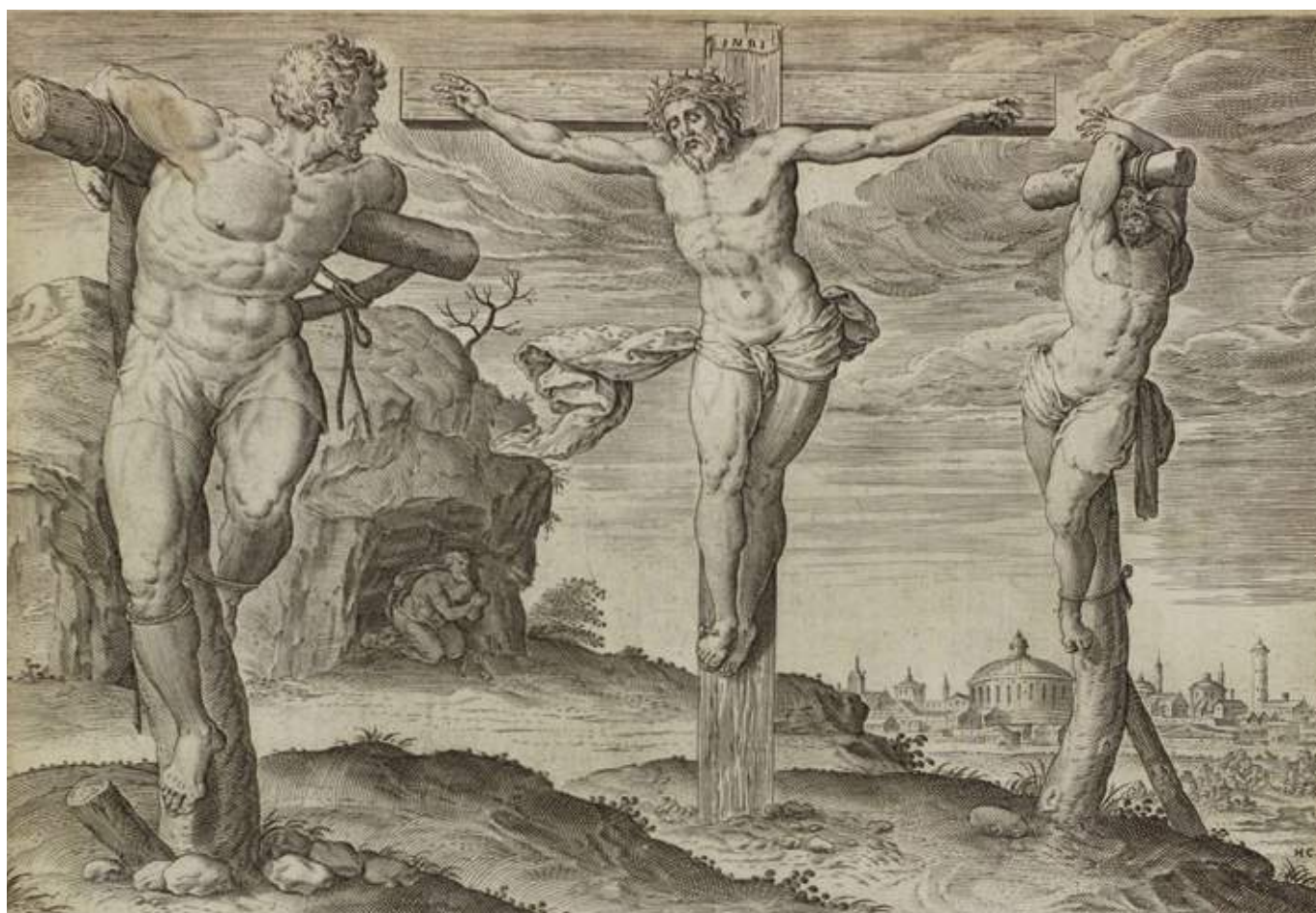
9. Hans Collaert after Ambrosius Francken, *Crucifixion with the Penitent St Peter* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible* (Gerard de jode, 1585)

that very century, some of the most diffused vehicles to disseminate ideas, values, and beliefs in Europe, but also elsewhere, as the prints collected by Mughal Emperors, such as Akbar (1542-1605) and Jahangir (1569-1627), clearly demonstrate.⁹

The propagation of thoughts, the migration of particular forms of expression, and the dissemination of highly admired artistic models – which would create phenomena as widely spread as the so-called “International Mannerism,” based on the re-elaboration of Italianate visual vocabularies, mainly borrowed from works by Raphael (1483-1520), Michelangelo (1474-1564), and Parmigianino (1504-1540)¹⁰ – is an important cultural tendency, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century. The elegance of these images invaded most of the courts in Europe, imposing their decorative

patterns from Prague to Fontainebleau, from Rome to Vienna. Artistic representations and systems of power appear, therefore, indissolubly intertwined, especially in regard to the worldwide circulation of printed images, whose communicational devices – depending on the contexts and on the historical circumstances, of course – could prevail over its artistic merits. Quoting scholar James Clifton’s remarks on this topic, one could go as far as to assert that, while

there is no doubt that collectors and connoisseurs valued the aesthetic qualities of prints [...] the subject matter and religious functions of [them] seem to have been of paramount importance, and most buyers, regardless of social or educational class, might well



10. Hans Collaert after Ambrosius Francken, *Crucifixion with the Penitent St Peter* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible* (Claesz Jansz Visccher, 1639)

be as content with a crude, pirated copy as with a fine original. To be sure, there is no doubt that collectors and connoisseurs valued the aesthetic qualities of prints of contemporary artists or earlier masters, even in some instances to the point of disinterest in the iconography or devotional function of the works. But the high artistic quality does not necessarily exclude or even overshadow doctrinal meaning and devotional function.¹¹

This seems to be the case, in fact, of the original compiler of the Bible examined in this exhibition. Based on this conceptual premise, it sounds plausible to exclude, from the list of potential compilers and original owners of this book, someone who might have been interested primarily in the artistic components of the engravings. More reasonably, one may suggest that these prints were selected and purchased in compliance of more pragmatic factors: first of all, woodcuts, burin engravings, and etchings were usually less expensive than paintings, on account of their serial mode of production and, consequently, they were affordable items even for middle-class people; second, the particular set of compositions inserted into this volume represent in a very clear, persuasive, and instructive way the biblical narratives they illustrate, displaying well-known iconographies and rather expressive formal codes; finally, most of these images could effectively perform the functions of pedagogical as well as mnemonic prompts, given the straightforward method with which they represent particular themes. In other words, thus composed, this Bible could become a most useful instruments during worship practices or for educational purposes.

2. The Hexham Abbey Bible: The (Revealing) History of Many (Solved) Mysteries

The Bible displayed at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art – containing *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The New Testament*, and *the whole Book of Psalmes Collected into English Meeter* – constitutes the main fo-

cus of the exhibition *Holy Beauty*, which, given the uniqueness of this stunning compilation of Sacred Scriptures and images, could be rightly called an early modern monument of Faith, Instruction, and Taste.

2.1. A Hypothesis of Chronology: the Assembling of Text and Images

Printed in 1629 by Thomas and John Buck at the University of Cambridge, England, the book contains, interpolated with the pages of the Scriptures, an extraordinary set of prints, carved in the technique known as burin, as we have already pointed out. Designed by renowned Flemish and Dutch masters, most of the engravings inserted into this volume were produced mainly between 1582 and 1585. Such a chronology, however, raises intriguing questions, both from a historical as well as hermeneutic standpoint: how could one explain, in a Bible printed in 1629, the presence of such a remarkable *corpus* of images dating from a previous period and created in different geographical areas? What might have been the functions performed by this richly-illustrated compilation? Finally, who could have been its compiler, or responsible for selecting, purchasing, and attentively ordering the prints in association with specific biblical passages?

As we shall explain in detail in the following pages, these engravings were included within the Bible nearly a century after they were originally designed and set in the market as autonomous, independent images, or series of prints. They were, then, purchased and arranged within this volume in order to illustrate some of the most relevant episodes of the *New Testament* and other equally important sessions of the Bible, such as the *Acts of the Apostles*, thus providing useful visual prompts for devotional and educational purposes. Once the images were arranged within the textual sequence they intended to visually translate or comment upon, the Bible was newly rebound – as it will be demonstrated in the next paragraphs – between 1643 and 1662.

This chronological hypothesis is supported by many structural, material, and historical evidences.

First of all, one must keep in mind that this Bible was a worship book, used in all probability as an instrument for private devotion and, perhaps, for pedagogical activities as well. The core of the volume is formed by *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The New Testament*. A handful of the images inserted into the book, illustrating scenes from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles – for example, the *Repentance of Peter* (ill.11), the *Widow's Mite* (ill. 12), the already mentioned *Crucifixion* (ill. 10), the *Conversion of Saul* (ill. 13), and a few other compositions – were printed later than the other engravings belonging to the book and can be dated around 1643¹². This year

constitutes, therefore, the *terminus post quem*, or “after which,” the volume and the images have been bound together.

On the other hand, the Bible shows little internal wear and tear, which clearly indicates that it was used as a worship tool for only a short amount of time, if ever, before the new Book of Common Prayer had replaced this – soon outdated – version in 1662. In fact, in 1661, the King of England, Charles II, issued a directive concerning the preparation of a new Book of Common Prayer, which was first published in London in 1662 (ill. 14). This new version would remain, until very recently, the



11. Philips Galle after Maerten de Vos, *The Repentance of Peter* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*



12. Gerard de Jode, *Widow's Mite* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*



13. Gerard de Jode, *The Conversion of Saul* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

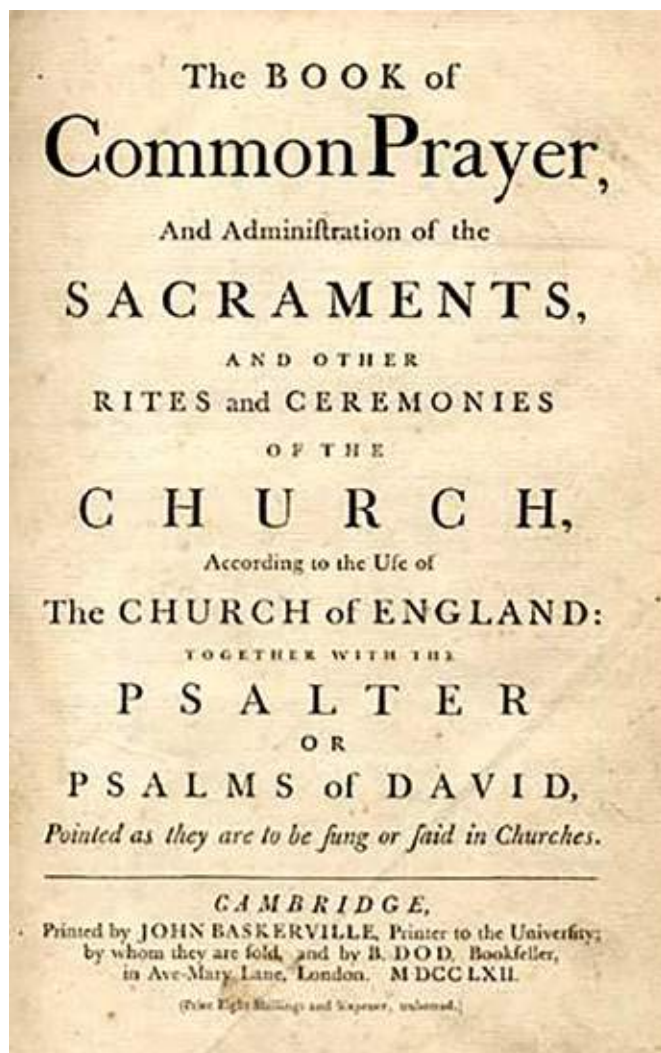
official prayer compilation of the Church of England, in substitution of the 1629 edition displayed in this exhibition.¹³

It seems, thereby, implausible to believe that the compiler of this volume – be it a cleric or a layman, a pragmatic patron or a sophisticated commissioner – would have put so much effort into inserting this carefully chosen group of images within a book that had already become obsolete as a prompt for devotional or instructional practices. It seems more reasonable to think that the compilation process might have taken place before 1662. Consequently, this date represents the *terminus ante quem*, or “before which,” the compilation must have been made.

Should this hypothesis prove correct, this unique combination of Bible and (no longer autonomous) prints could be dated around 1643 and 1662. Two dates – one should not neglect to mention – that mark significantly also one of the most dramatic periods in the history of the Church of England, during the menacing years of the Civil War.¹⁴

2.2. At the Origins of Originality: Rev. Ritschel and the Compilation of the Bible

In order to identify the compiler of this volume, an important clue is provided by the family crest and



14. *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1762). London, Private collection

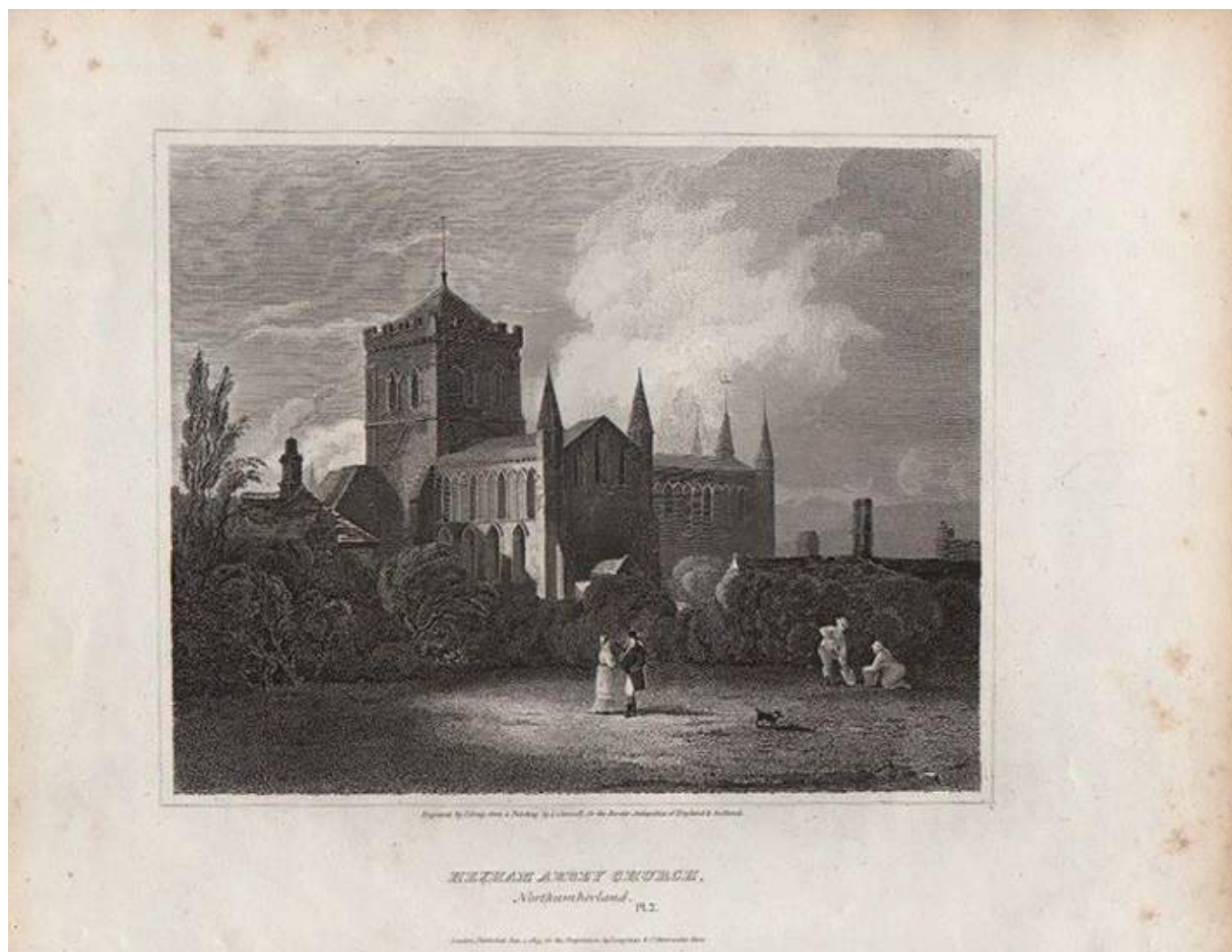


15. Bookplate from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

the bookplate present in the book (ill. 15). Thanks to these internal evidences, one may assert that the Family Clarke – active between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century – was responsible for binding the Bible in its current shape.¹⁵ In all probability, the book was last bound by Rev. Slaughter Clarke (1741–1820), father of Rev. Robert Clarke (1771–1824), whose bookplate is glued to the inside cover of the volume. The last identifiable owner is Livingston Clarke (c. 1845–c. 1910). In all these years, the family resided in Hexham, a civil parish in Northumberland, England.

This last point is particularly important for it locates the book – on a micro-historical level of analy-

sis – within a specific context. Thanks to this information, it sounds more than plausible to suggest the name of Rev. George Ritschel, Sr (1616–1683) as the original compiler of this extraordinary – indeed, unique – Bible and Worship Book. Born “in the borders of Bohemia,” as scholar Robert Fitzgibbon maintains,¹⁶ Rev. Ritschel spent most of his formative years working as an assistant of Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), well-known humanist, author of influential treatises on Theology and Pedagogy, such as the *Didactica Magna*, or *The Great Didactic* (London, 1657), in which he fervently stressed the importance of images in the learning process either as stimulating teaching tools or mnemonic devices that could



16. John Greig, *Hexham Abbey Church*. Albany (OR), Collection of Historic Bibles & Engravings

facilitate both the assimilation as well as the memorization of relevant data.¹⁷

In those years, Rev. Ritschel traveled constantly to Holland, Denmark, and Germany, before moving definitively to England, where he was, at first, nominated reader at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and then, in 1655, appointed perpetual curate and Mercers' lecturer at the Hexham Abbey (ill. 16):¹⁸ a role that he would fulfill until his death. Described by Fitzgibbon as “an enemy [*sic*] to all innovations in the church,”¹⁹ Rev. Ritschel published in 1663 a book eloquently titled *Defense of the Ceremonies of the Church in England* (or, *Dissertatio de caerimoniis Ecclesiae Anglicanae*), in which he strenuously defended the Anglican Church against the risks of “supersti-

tion and idolatry.”²⁰ He died in November 1683 and was buried, as Fitzgibbon points out, “in the choir of Hexham Church near the Reading desk.”²¹

On the basis of this set of historical premises, one could affirm that the Bible displayed in this exhibition – with the remarkable addition of a conspicuous *corpus* of Netherlandish Renaissance and Mannerist prints – was presumably compiled in association with the activities promoted, or undertaken, by Rev. Ritschel at Hexham Abbey. Moreover, it is possible to suggest that such a strategically-planned compilation might also reflect his ideas concerning the use of images in a religious context, partly based on Comenius' remarks on the same theme. The choice of illustrating segments of this Worship Book with Dutch and Flemish prints could be the direct consequence of his well-documented familiarity and incessant contacts with the Netherlands and nearby territories. While observing this carefully assembled Bible, along with its illuminating sequence of images, one may not refrain from remembering Rev. Ritschel's epitaph at the Hexham Abbey, which sustains that “he might have bin [*sic*] a great light to this northern corner of the land.”²²

2.3. In Defense of Books and Images: Rev. Ritschel and Comenius' Didactic Legacy

A crucial part of Rev. Ritschel's formative years was spent under the protection of and in association with Jan Amos Comenius (ill. 17), a humanist who had continually stressed, in the pages of his *opus magna*, *The Great Didactic* (ill. 18), the unparalleled value of books and printed pictures as pedagogical materials with which one could enhance, if not facilitate, the process of education of young people.²³ Interestingly, Comenius compares his “new method” of teaching to the “typographic art,” claiming that, “notwithstanding its being more difficult, expensive, and laborious, [it] is, nevertheless, more appropriate to write books in a fastest, more precise, and elegant way.”²⁴ His admiration for this technical innovation is such that he will even forge a Greek-inspired neologism, which intentionally echoes the word “typography,” in order to underline the novelty of his pedagogical



17. George Glover, *Portrait of Jan Amos Comenius*. London, Private collection

approach, calling it *Didacography* (διδασχογραφία). Like a printing machine, “the regular mechanism of our method,” Comenius states, will be able to “imprint all sciences in the spirit [of the students] in the same manner in which, externally, a paper can be printed with ink.”²⁵

If compared to hand-made manuscripts, printed books present countless advantages. Thanks to Gutenberg’s invention, in fact, books could be produced more quickly, without mistakes (largely due, in the past, to the exhausting activity of the copyists), and in a very elegant fashion, thus offering a much more affordable didactic instrument for teachers living all over the world. In virtue of their serial means of production and worldwide distribution, books could also guarantee that the same messages, contents, and ideas could travel across distant lands and reach diverse places, cultures, and audiences. Consequently, educators working in different areas were tremendously facilitated in their educational tasks,

thus making teachers even among people who had not received from nature the ability to teach, for the mission of each one of them is not so much take from their own minds what they were expected to teach, but, more importantly, communicate and infuse into the youth an erudition that had been already established and whose tools also had been already prepared and set in their hands.²⁶

Among these previously prepared books and didactic materials, Comenius mentions a particular kind of volume, that he calls “Guide-books.” As implied by their very name, these volumes aimed to offer a pre-structured, carefully-conceived educational trajectory to their readers, whose variegated stages, goals, and tasks were gradually displayed in coincidence with the process of reading itself. In a word: reading becomes an active form of learning.

However, such an articulated process of learning, understanding, and memorizing should be attentively organized according to a well-planned sequence and follow different steps, before reaching its main goal, that is to say, the education of young people. Different subject matters should be introduced in

gradually: at first, it is useful to explain the general rules of each discipline (such as Logic, Rhetoric, Mathematics, etc.) and, then, provide tangible examples to illustrate each one of them, preferably borrowed “from the practices that take place in everyday life.”²⁷ This path of instruction would allow students to develop, first of all, their senses, along with their memory; then, their intelligence and, at last, their capacity of judgment. “Knowledge starts with the senses,” sustains in fact Comenius, “through the imagination, it passes into the memory and, thanks to the observation of particular examples, it reaches the intelligence of the universals and, finally, [...] releases a judgment.”²⁸

Books are an essential tool in the process of instruction thus outlined. Different editions of the same



18. Jan Amos Comenius, Title Page of *Opera Didactica Omnia* (Amsterdam, 1657). Mannheim, Private collection

texts, however, could confound students. Therefore, “it would be better if the books adopted [in the classroom] were from the same edition so that their pages, paragraphs, and any other component would correspond one to the other.”²⁹ Likewise, images can be a tremendous instrument in the learning process. In a particularly striking session of his volume, under the title *The Content of the Books Must Be Painted on the Walls*, the author asserts the enriching pedagogical value of images:

In order to achieve our goals, it would be very helpful to paint on the walls of the classroom a summary of all books of each class, showing both texts (with selective brevity) as well as illustrations, portraits, and reliefs, through which students’ senses, memory, and intelligence could be stimulated every day.³⁰

And, in the following sentence, Comenius comments, adding a religious flavor to his thoughts:

God Himself has filled every corner of this grand theatre of the world with paintings, sculptures, and images as living representatives of His wisdom, and wants us to be instructed by their means.³¹

Images stimulate the senses in a way that no other form of expression could ever attain. For Comenius, truth and certainty “depend upon the witness of the senses.”³² Consequently, the pedagogue insists that, “if one truly wants his [or her] students to acquire knowledge with truth and certainty, it is necessary to make every effort to teach all disciplines through the direct action of the gaze and the sensorial perception.”³³

In such a learning process, based on visuality and direct apprehension, images will occupy a most promising position as powerful educational tools and discursive prompts: “with images,” Comenius sustains, “one can easily imprint in everyone’s mind the sacred history and other histories as well. It is evident that each one of us can imagine more easily and quickly what a rhinoceros is if, at least once, we have seen it (even by means of a picture).”³⁴

These “ocular demonstrations,” as Comenius puts it³⁵, have the unparalleled merit of providing tangible, immediate, and highly persuasive means with which ideas, values, and beliefs can be effectively taught. Paraphrasing ancient poet and orator, Horace, Comenius maintains that “those things that one gets through the ears attract much more slowly attention than the ones that are faithfully set before the beholder’s eyes.”³⁶ And “attention,” the pedagogue claims, “is the light of knowledge.”³⁷

Quite remarkably, the paragraphs devoted to these reflections on the usefulness of images in the educational process continues throughout Comenius’ pages, with very significant statements concerning *The Grand Usefulness of Images in Teaching*, as the title of one of the conclusive sentences paradigmatically recites: “If it is not possible to teach with things themselves at hand, one ought to use representations of them, that is to say, pictures or drawings made especially for teaching.”³⁸

Thus applied, illustrations have the power of enticing the attention of students thanks to their perceptual tangibility and visual immediacy, favoring a nearly first-hand experience of facts, forces, and phenomena they refer to. In Comenius’ *Didactica Magna*, images unexpectedly play the role of authentic evidences:

Everything that one teaches must be taught in a direct manner, without tergiversations. In fact, we see things directly, and not in a vague way, when we see them not confusedly or obscurely, but with our gaze. Whatever is the subject to be taught, set it in front of students’ eyes, letting them see it nakedly in its essence, and not by means of subterfuges, words, metaphors, allusions and hyperboles, or figures of speech that one uses to enlarge or diminish things that are already known.³⁹

Ultimately, for Comenius, the didactic force of images lies in their capacity of crossing and transcending any epistemological boundaries, for they can be equally useful while teaching Botanic, Zoology, Geometry, Geography, History and even Religion. Needless to say, for the sake of our interpre-

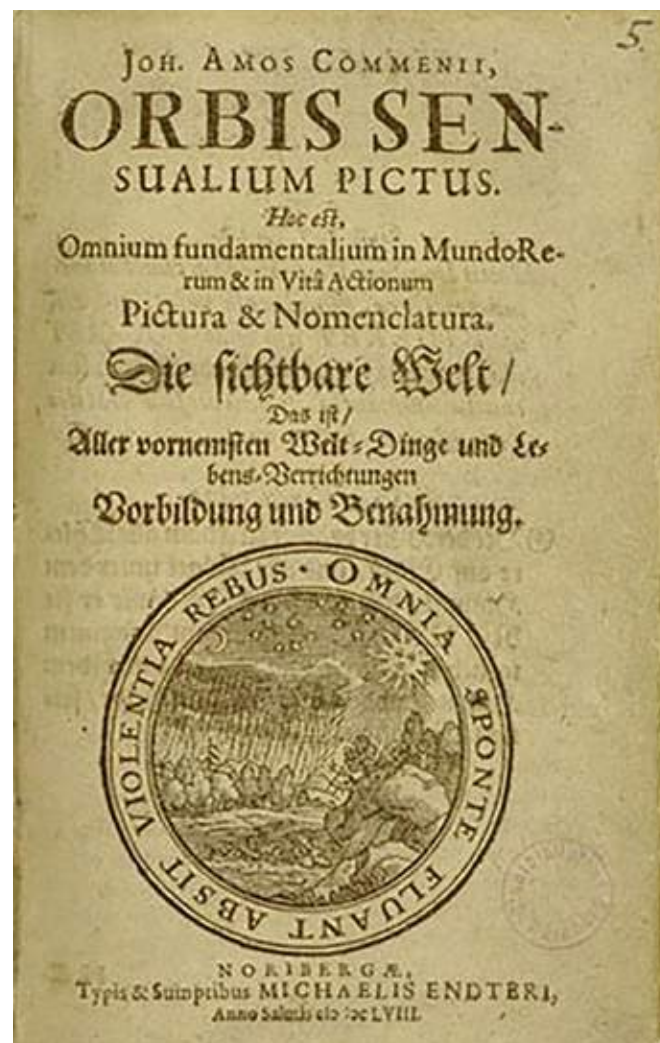
tation, this last point is particularly relevant: according to Comenius, images are such strong vehicles of didactic demonstrations because they can represent not only what is visible *per se*, but also forms, concepts, or ideas that still need to find a visual shape to be properly shown and grasped. In this sense, images can be especially functional to teaching Religion for they could provide palpable forms for spiritual – i.e., invisible, not natural – entities. Nothing could be more effective to teach metaphysical – or biblical, one may add – subject than pictures, drawings, or prints. Images can provide “greater evidences” and facilitate the learning process of any subject matter, from the understanding of the human body to the apprehension of biblical narratives and religious dogmas.

If anyone doubts that all things, even the spiritual and absent ones (which are located or have happened in Heaven, or in the abysses, or in the ultramarine regions) can be, in this way [that is to say, by means of images], presented to the senses, one has just to recall that, through the work of the Divine Providence, all things have been made with perfect harmony, so that superior things can be represented by inferior ones, absent ones by means of present ones, and the invisible things by means of visible ones.⁴⁰

Such an innovative, almost first-hand learning process finds its methodological legitimacy in what Comenius denominates “the mental vision technique”,⁴¹ that is, learning through the eyes and interpreting on the basis of visual evidences. No wonder if, in another publication by the venerable seventeenth-century pedagogue words and images will become the two fused sides of the same instructional coin. In a book written in London, but published in Nuremberg in 1658, programmatically titled *Orbis Sensalium Pictus* (ill. 19) – that is to say, “Visible World in Pictures, or a nomenclature and pictures for all the chief things that are in the world, and of mens employments [*sic*] therein”⁴² – Comenius offers a teaching method particularly devoted to the instruction of children how to read. This book is charac-

terized by the consistent use of images and words displayed in order to compose a richly illustrated encyclopedic dictionary. For this reason, a nineteenth-century translation of this volume, published in England, enthusiastically describes it as “the first children’s picture book.”⁴³

In the original seventeenth-century edition, copperplate prints accompanied the explanatory texts, which were given both in Latin and in the different local language, depending, of course, on the editions. Interestingly, this volume could introduce, in this way, consensually-accepted (European) notions to children living in different geographical areas and, therefore, belonging to various cultural settings,



19. Jan Amos Comenius, Title Page of *Orbis Sensalium Pictus* (Nuremberg, 1658). Mannheim, Private collection

while teaching them to read their “native” languages. The acquisition of such a basic set of information – concerning the natural, anthropological, and even spiritual worlds (ills. 20–22), according to what could be nowadays an essentially Eurocentric perspective – takes place during the very process of learning how to read and thanks to the mutual assistance provided by iconic and verbal signs.

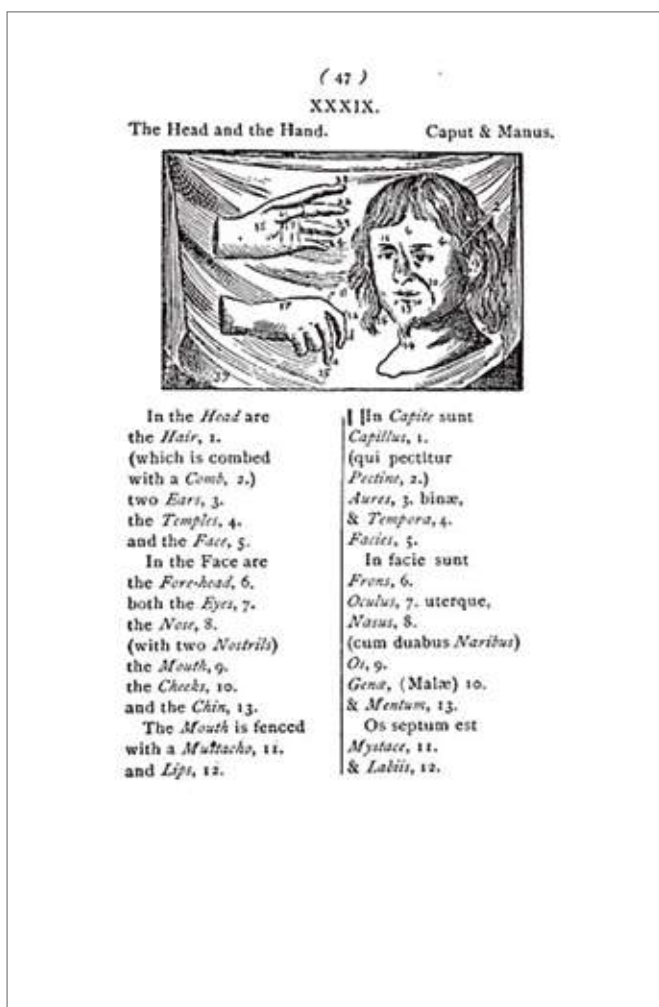
In these pages, Comenius advocates for a perfect juxtaposition and integral semiotic translation of “pictures” and “nomenclatures” through “descriptions,” as he professes in the opening paragraphs of this Picture-Book: “*The Pictures* are the representation of all visible things (to which also things invisible are reduced after their fashion) of the whole world.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, “*The nomenclatures* are

the Inscriptions, or Titles set every one over their own Pictures, expressing the whole thing by its own general term;”⁴⁵ finally, “*The Descriptions* are the explications of the parts of the Pictures, so expressed by their own proper terms, as that same figure which is added to every piece of the picture, and the term of it, always sheweth what things belongeth one to another.”⁴⁶ In other words, the immediacy of pictures will make the activity of recognizing, understanding, memorizing, and knowing not only much faster and easier, but also – according to the “Comenian Method”⁴⁷ – funnier as the author confidently argues:

To entice witty children to it, that they may not conceit a torment to be in the school, but dainty fare. For it is apparent, that children (even from their infancy almost) are delighted with Pictures, and willingly please their eyes with these lights: And it will be very well worth the pains to have once brought it to pass, that scare-crows may be taken away out of Wisdom’s Gardens.⁴⁸

At this point of our analysis, it is essential to ask oneself how these reflections, focusing on Comenius’ didactic innovations, can be related to the *Book of Common Prayer* displayed in this exhibition. In the context of a study centered on the Hexham Abbey Bible, with its unprecedented, unparalleled, and unique assembling of sixteenth-century prints, the didactic approach inaugurated by Comenius offer a most stimulating path of interpretation to better understand the interaction of images and texts in the volume compiled by Rev. Ritschel. First of all, it is important to recall that a personal, close, and well-documented relationship united Rev. Ritschel to Comenius, despite their “growing divergence of view” in regard to specific metaphysical matters, as scholar Fitzgibbon has pointed out.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the echo provoked by the publication of *The Great Didactic* – and possibly also the *Orbis Pictus* – might have reached the attention of someone who had been for so long a beloved pupil of their author. Therefore, one can plausibly assume that Rev. Ritschel may have known and read Come-

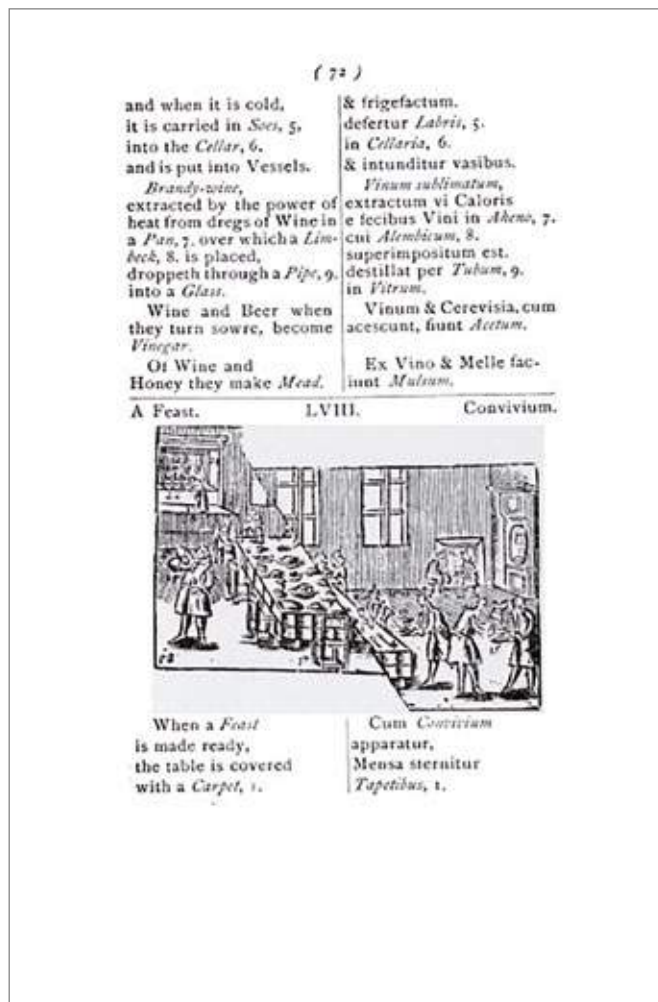


20. Jan Amos Comenius, *Orbis Sensalium Pictus*, fol. 47

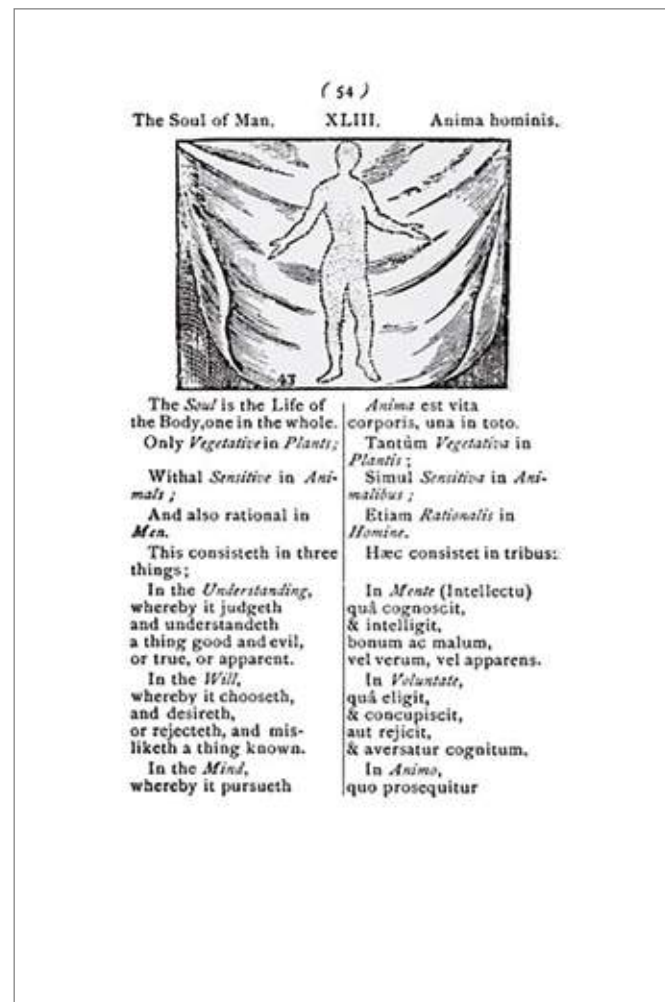
nus's monumental works on Didactics and shared some of their distinctive approaches, especially in regard to the adoption of "pictures" to clarify, explain, and further elaborate upon "nomenclatures," followed by an important moment of reflection and "description" of the subjects, topics, and themes addressed. If this hypothesis sounds acceptable, then, one could also infer that some of the ideas developed in those books might have influenced, or at least intellectually stimulated, Rev. Ritschel's pedagogical aims, methods, and means, particularly in his statements concerning the usefulness of images in an educational process.

On the other hand, this hypothesis seems to find an indisputable confirmation in the very method of compilation adopted by the reverend in the

making of the Hexham Abbey Bible. By inserting carefully-chosen (sixteenth-century) prints in order to accompany the biblical narratives in a (seventeenth-century) Book of Common Prayer and New Testament that was not originally conceived to contain illustrations, the compiler shows a particular didactic inclination. Otherwise, one cannot explain the presence of such a conspicuous *corpus* of images within the book and grasp their not merely illustrative functions. Echoing Comenius' conviction regarding the driving force of images as pedagogical tools also within devotional, confessional, and religious matters, Rev. Ritschel makes the biblical passages more quickly accessible and more immediately understandable to an audience of layman – or young people during the catechism, for instance – thanks to



21. Jan Amos Comenius, *Orbis Sensalium Pictus*, fol. 72



22. Jan Amos Comenius, *Orbis Sensalium Pictus*, fol. 54

the systematic adoption of pictures as visual prompts, mnemonic devices, and iconic summaries of the stories they are related to. Even in the case in which this volume were used as a Worship Book for private consultation only, the hypothesis centered on the didactic function of these images remains still plausible.

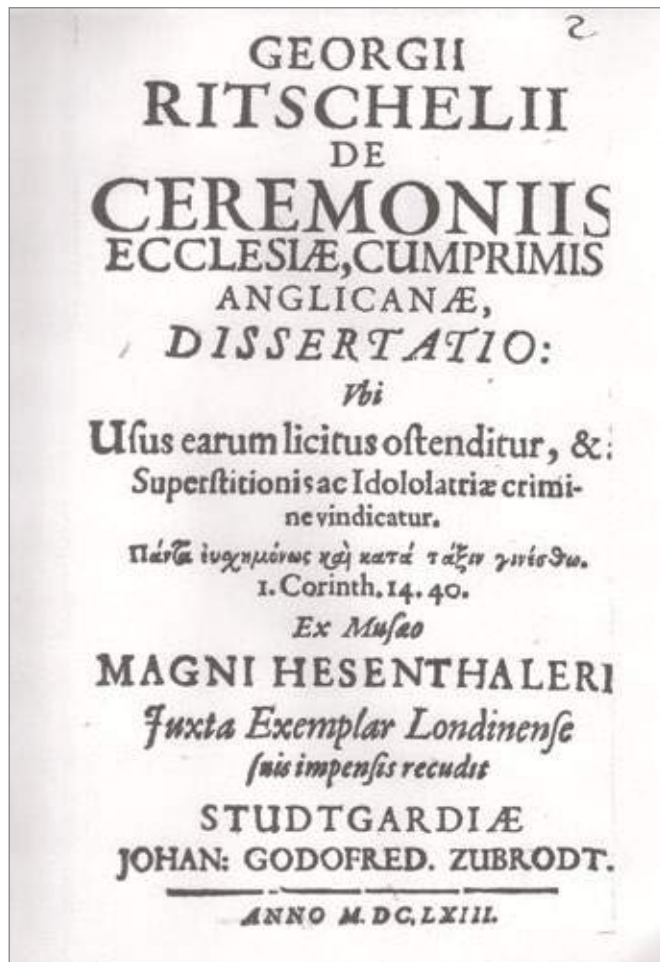
Another important point to emphasize is that the images assembled in this book are in dialogue with – and not merely subordinated to – the texts they are paired with. Words and images appear, in fact, in constant interaction in the various *Gospels* and *Acts of the Apostles* in which they are inserted within the Hexham Abbey Bible. Furthermore, the degree of nearly parity between visual and verbal texts is guaranteed, on the one hand, by the remarkable quality of the engravings included in the volume (which implies

at least a certain level of stylistic and iconographic autonomy) and, on the other, by the recurrent use of allegorical and symbolic imagery (which implies the need for further hermeneutic explanations).⁵⁰

Such a “conversational” metaphor – in lack of any better expression to describe the particular interaction of images and words that characterizes this bible – seems to capture the spirit with which text and prints were combined in the making of this exquisite volume: it is easy, in fact, to imagine Rev. Ritschel using this richly illustrated and attentively composed Bible as personal vehicle to stimulate religious reflections or, on the opposite, as a most stimulating pedagogical tool used to explain the ethical, metaphysical, and even behavioral issues raised by the biblical narratives, while literally indicating figures, images, and textual passages, standing in front of a hall filled with believers, or alone during a moment of personal prayer.

Moreover, the legitimacy of using images in relation to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England is a topic directly addressed by Rev. Ritschel in his already mentioned *Dissertatio*, or *Defense of the Ceremonies of the Church in England* (ill. 23).⁵¹ Even though this text does not address, in particular, the question of images within a religious context *per se*, it offers, however, some incisive considerations about the risks of committing idolatry and acting in a superstitious way. Accordingly, this text examines several issues concerning the validity, efficiency, and limits of visual representations within a religious setting. In many paragraphs, in fact, the reverend stresses the utility of displaying right before the eyes of the members of a community images and pictures that could increase their sense of devotion, or *dispositio* to pray, worship, and respect God.

Expressions such as “*ponere ob oculos*” – that is to say, “to set before the eyes” – will appear consistently in Ritschel’s reflections as recurrent rhetorical formulae. For example, in the passages in which he explains the necessity of wearing candid clothes during the celebration of the mass, given its symbolic power of reminding the audience to keep one’s soul always candid, the reverend claims that the white dresses “set before the eyes” (*ponere ob oculos*)⁵² of his listeners this very point, offering, with striking immediacy, a



23. George Ritschel, Title Page of *De Ceremoniis Ecclesiae, Cumprimis Anglicanae, Dissertatio* (Stuttgart, 1663). Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense

visual reminder of one's urge for purity and candor. Likewise, he justifies the legitimacy of making the sign of the cross, against the accusation of idolatry, on account of the fact that this symbol "sets before the eyes" (*ponens ob oculos*)⁵³ an emotionally-appealing sign of the suffering of the Christ. For this very reason, he asserts that early Christian *militiae* had the custom to raise a cross every time they converted a community of non-believers, thus "setting before the eyes" (*poneretur ob oculos*)⁵⁴ of the transformed populations the signs of their new spiritual Victory. In Rev. Ritschel's opinion, even moral issues could be better understood and discussed if one exposes the facts clearly and with simple words, almost as though they were visually displayed and metaphorically "set before the eyes" (*proponere ob oculos*) of the interlocutors.⁵⁵

All these statements confirm Rev. Ritschel's profound conviction that visual evidences – due to their immediacy and tangible presence – could effectively help to improve the transmission of ideas, values, and beliefs among people. Hence, the usefulness of certain rituals and ceremonies within the Church of England as the reverend programmatically proclaims: without crossing the dangerous boundaries of idolatry and superstition, these rites create, through their very regular occurrences and timeless repetition of gestures, poses, and acts, models of behavior that increase the confessional unity as well as the sense of religious belonging among the members of a community. Rites unite Heaven with Earth. By faithfully respecting these accepted ceremonies, clearly described in the *Dissertatio*, believers may feel again their feet solidly ground on the territory of orthodoxy, while praying with their eyes fervently oriented toward the sky (*oculos in coelum*).⁵⁶

In this process of transcendental purification and religious introspection, pictures can be very helpful for, as the reverend systematically sustains, "images are noble" (*nobis est imago*).⁵⁷ It is not difficult, therefore, to connect these remarks with the method of compilation used by Rev. Ritschel in the creation of the Hexham Abbey Bible. Based on these premises, one could suggest that, in order to further enhance the volume's potential as an instrument for worship, catechesis, and personal spiritual reflections, the rev-

erend/compiler might have added a series of significant *imagines* able to adequately fulfill these conditions. From a hermeneutic perspective, the Hexham Abbey Bible emerges as a perfect symbiosis between Rev. Ritschel's *Dissertatio* and Comenius' *Didactica*, for it brings to one's attention the instructive, persuasive, and even ideological power of images. Like written sentences, or suggestive poetries, images can evoke ideas, while transmitting all sorts of messages. As Tzvetan Todorov once claimed, "Pictures speak!"⁵⁸

3. Northern Visual Poetries: Words and Images in the Sixteenth-Century Print Making Industry

As we have seen, images and words have a long history together. Metaphorically, one could go as far back as the biblical Genesis and the Creation of the First Man to find a pertinent paradigm for this profound relationship: if, at the Beginning of the Times, "the Word was God," shortly afterward Adam was conceived and then modeled in resemblance of God's image just to provide, after a while, *names* to all created *forms*.

During the Italian *Quattrocento*, especially under the philosophical aegis of the Humanism, the symbiosis between these two territories – the textual and the iconic – entailed *de facto* a conceptual equivalence: words and images were soon considered as equally powerful, persuasive, and touching means of representation.⁵⁹ Given the Humanistic focus on the study of the Classical tradition as an essential premise for achieving perfection in any field of knowledge and creativity, Italian Renaissance artists and patrons shared the conviction that words and images were both excellent vehicles to disseminate ideas, express emotions, and convey the most complex religious beliefs. Such a profound cohesion was ultimately sealed by a rhetorical formula, borrowed from ancient poet, Horace: *Ut pictura poësis*, that is to say, "as is painting, so is poetry."⁶⁰ According to this concept, writers and painters are expected to follow similar norms and rules while creating their works.

The legacy provided by ancient and Renaissance orators – with their rich set of categories and critical terminology, such as *compositio*, *dispositio*, and *inventio*⁶¹ – will become the paramount frame of reference for artists and poets in the making of their compositions in the next three centuries. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, in particular, such a growing vocabulary of art-related terms not only will migrate toward the Northern lands, but will be also the object of significant translations, adaptations, and theoretical revisions, in the attempt to find ways of describing and explaining the art phenomena that could fully define the distinctive character of works produced in Germany, Flanders, and the Netherlands.⁶²

Consequently, a divide will soon emerge in these Nordic territories between theoretically-engaged “artists” and manually-skilled “artisans.”⁶³



24. Karel van Mander, Title Page of *Het Schilder-Boeck* (Haarlem, 1604). Rome, Istituto Olandese

The ideal artist would be considered, accordingly, the one able to transfer his intellectual faculties to the hands, thus transforming a manual activity into a practical knowledge. It is no wonder if one of the most influential sixteenth-century art and theoreticians, Karel van Mander, in his *Schilder-Boeck* (ill. 24), or *Book of Painting* (Haarlem 1604),⁶⁴ will praise an artist exactly for possessing “learned hands” (*gheleerde handt*), unlike any other professional.⁶⁵

In addition, audiences too will be classified in accordance with their degree of competence in the evaluation of art matters, which will ultimately lead to a sharp social distinction between “learned” (*doctos*) and “ordinary” (*vulgus*) viewers.⁶⁶ While the former will know how to appreciate the forms created by poets and painters primarily on account of their specific artistic merits, the latter will admire these same images merely on the basis of their resemblance to the natural world. For the *doctos*, art-created forms could disclose the intellectual dimensions of a discourse, thus becoming authentic “visual poetries.” For the *vulgus*, they were first and foremost mirrors of the visible sphere.

Accomplished masters, however, will learn how to conciliate in their works needs and expectations coming from both audiences, as Van Mander consistently repeats in his treatise. This volume – as we have briefly mentioned above – constitutes the most important treatise to understand the innovations inaugurated by Northern artists between the fifteenth-century and the very date of its publication, in the first decade of the seventeenth-century. From a conceptual perspective, Van Mander offers the richest lexicon of art-related terms ever compiled in the Netherlands, borrowing generously from – but also radically reassessing – Italian sources, such as Alberti’s *De Pictura* (*On Painting*, 1435) and Vasari’s *Le Vite* (*Lives*, 1550), while operating a calculated rethinking of this rich set of notions and parameters in order to verify their legitimacy and functionality when applied outside the boundaries in which they were originally conceived.⁶⁷

In regard to the social and cultural divide that characterized different kinds of artists and audiences as well, Van Mander provides a clear example in

his biography of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). In this narrative, the author recalls that the German painter, writer, and engraver “was considered in high esteem not only among ordinary people [*ghemeen volcke*] but also by knowledgeable persons and learned art lovers [*Gheleerden en Const-verstandigen*] as well as by grand lords [*grooten Heeren*].”⁶⁸ Part of an artist’s intelligence, in Van Mander’s opinion, laid in his ability to create works that could be appreciated in different contexts. Given, in fact, the “migratory” nature of prints – made in a specific place but traded in many distant lands and sent amidst diverse cultures – sixteenth-century artists had to be even more attentive when exploring the polysemic strategies of their images, if they wanted to reach the favor and respond to the needs of different audiences.

Moreover, one may not forget that many engravings dealt simultaneously with texts and images and, partly for this reason, they became one of the most popular and searched-for medium in sixteenth-century Europe. In the creation of engravings such as the ones assembled in the Hexham Abbey Bible, for instance, artists had to go through a highly collaborative process of production. First of all, the making of these works required the joint efforts of a team composed by a designer (*invenit*, “invented”), an engraver (*fecit* or *sculpsit* “executed”), and a publisher (*excudebat*, “issued”), whose names will equally converge toward the attribution of “authorship.”⁶⁹ For example, in a remarkable composition inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible – representing an episode from the Acts of the Apostles and, more specifical-



25. Hendrick Goltzius after Johan Stradanus, *Paul Bitten by a Serpent* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

ly, the scene of *Paul Bitten by a Serpent* (Acts 28:3) (ill. 25) – it is possible to find the complete triad of authors in the signatures that seal the work: *Iohan Stradanus inuen.* (invented by Giovanni Stradano, aka, Johannes Stradanus, aka, Jan van der Straet) *Philippus Galle excu.* (published by Philips Galle) and, last but certainly not least, *Hgoltzius sculp.* (carved by Hendrick Goltzius).

In regard to the textual elements of an engraving, printmaking processes involved very often the participation of – sometimes well-known – humanists, poets, and even philosophers, like Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) and Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert (1522–1590) (ills. 26–27) in the writing of verses or inscription to accompany an image.⁷⁰ At the end of these complex, team-oriented procedures, the resulting print offers a profound fusion of words and images, even in those



26. Hendrick Goltzius, *Portrait of Justus Lipsius*. Amsterdam, Private collection

cases in which the latter aim to simply illustrate the former. At its best, however, an engraving is an intellectually compelling and artistically autonomous form of visual poetry.

In accordance with the conceptual paradigm of *Ut Pictura Poesis*, the more or less pronounced knowledge of an audience in regard to art matters, could be measured on the basis of its reactions in front of a painting, a drawing, or a print. As far as “ordinary people” are concerned, Van Mander describes many examples of their poor behavior, due to the lack of any theoretical, iconographic, or stylistic frame of reference. In the biography of Cornelis Ketel, for example, the Flemish writer describes the embarrassing situation in which a man, who had no preparation in the field of art or any familiarity with well-known textual sources, was not able to grasp the theme represented by the artist, even though it was a quite common one, and ended up exchanging a mythological depiction of Danae for a Christian Annunciation to the Holy Virgin!⁷¹

Other cases of misunderstanding among “ordinary” audiences, however, were far less amusing and assumed the dramatic contours of violence, hate, and persecution. Such was the case of the devastating attacks that annihilated the works preserved in many churches, chapels, and city halls in Germany, Flanders, and the Netherlands, during the wave of iconoclasm that spread around 1566.⁷² With expressions that do not leave room for apologies or excuses, Van Mander complains about these catastrophic events, describing them as “the iconoclastic war” (*den krijgh oft beeld-stormen*),⁷³ the “insane image storm” (*d’uytsinnighe beeldstorminghe*)⁷⁴ or “the devastating Deluge of image storm” (*de rasende Diluvie der beeldstorminghe*),⁷⁵ perpetrated by the “ignorant fury of church-destroyers” (*onverstandighen yver der Kerck-braeck*).⁷⁶

On the opposite side of these destructive “non”-audiences, Van Mander places in the highest position the peaceful, always tempered, and well-balanced behavior displayed, on the contrary, by people who are “knowledgeable” (*verstandighe*) in art matters. This public of exquisite connoisseurs will be, in fact, enthusiastically described by the author as art experts (*const-verstandighen*), art lovers (*const-lief-*

hebbers) and passionate art collectors (*const-liefdighen*).⁷⁷ Among this group of learned men, a special place will be occupied by those artists who have also dedicated their time to reflect upon – or even write about – the principles and rules of art, publishing treatises, delivering public lectures, or giving private lessons, on these crucial topics.

Excellent examples of such a promising combination of intellectual faculties, skilled hands, and fertile baggage of cultural references – which should characterize, according to Van Mander, any ingenious practitioner of this “noble and liberal art,” that is, Painting⁷⁸ – are engravers like Albrecht Dürer, Maarten van Heemskerck, and Hendrick Goltzius. As a matter of fact, in many passages of his book, Van Mander asserts that a master’s distinguishing faculty of “understanding” can be promptly noticeable not only in the images he have produced, but also from the quality of his aesthetic judgments and ethical conduct. An artist genuinely conscious of his abilities must know how to evaluate the works made by other masters using consistent criteria and terminology.

That explains why Van Mander tends to emphasize exemplary narratives in which artists expressed extremely astute judgments about any art-related issue, adopting well-chosen, and incisive words. In the case of Goltzius, in particular, it “was very stimulating and instructive for the painters to hear him speak about these things,” Van Mander comments, “for he spoke of incarnate fluids, and fiery shadows, using archaic and unusual expressions.”⁷⁹ In utilizing locutions such as “incarnate fluids” to describe the working method used by different artists, Goltzius gives evidence of great exegetic lucidity and of his even more surprising interpretative acumen, offering a meaningful ekphrastic synthesis based on the use of apt verbal formulations and, at times, expressions of dense poetic incisiveness.

A truly universal teacher, Goltzius embodies, in the *Schilder-Boeck*, the ideal of an artist who is educated and discreet, judicious and honest, moderate and virtuous, sententious but not doctrinaire, versed in many disciplines, and equally engaged in the study of the natural sciences: an artist manually skilled, intellectually vigorous, and keen to offer judgments

full of wisdom and worthy of utterance like the best rhetorical instructor or the most lucid Stoic philosopher. An artist whose works must be seen with the eyes of the intellect.

Unsurprisingly, a similar degree of intelligence in creating “visual poetries” can be seen also in many Goltzius’ works. A particularly stunning example of the application of the doctrine *Ut Pictura Poësis* in the making of elegant, yet highly discursive images, is the series of engravings designed by Goltzius, representing three famous mythological couples: *Jupiter and Juno*, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, and *Pluto and Persephone* (ills. 28–30). Recently purchased by the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, these three magnificent engravings were printed from copper plates around 1594. Stylistically similar in their masterful use of the burin, these images were clearly intended to be seen as a triptych, given the presence of the progressive numbers, from 1 to 3, placed next to the artist’s monogram – formed by his initials, HG



27. Hendrick Goltzius, *Portrait of Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert*. Amsterdam, Private collection

– in the lower left corner of each composition. The scenes, depicting the peaceful, loving relationships of three couples belonging to Classical mythology, are further enriched by the evocative verses written in Latin by the Dutch poet and humanist, Franco Estius (ca. 1545–ca. 1594), who until his death frequently collaborated with Goltzius.

In an atmosphere of serenity and sensuousness, brilliantly evoked by the smooth curvilinear rendering of the burin, the first scene (ill. 28) depicts an allegory of the power of love. Here the union of Jupiter and Juno, the supreme rulers of Olympus, is represented in a quiet, tender setting. Floating on a sinuous cloud and surrounded by Jupiter's distinctive attributes – including the eagle holding his thunder-bolt-shaped scepter – the protagonists of the scene exchange a silent, almost hypnotic, dialogue of gazes,



28. Hendrick Goltzius, *Jupiter and Juno*. Salem (OR), Hallie Ford Museum of Art

turning their eyes delicately toward each other. The subtle, yet intense, eroticism that pervades the scene is visually enhanced by the eloquent entanglement of Jupiter's fingers, which caress Juno's neck with one hand, while playing with her fingers with the other. Far from earthly discord, Concordia is the coronation of Love, as the verses composed by Estius suggest:

Whenever Saturn's daughter merrily visits the bedroom of Jupiter

*And caresses the god, propped up on her rosy arms,
The three-forced missiles are idle, there is no thunder
all over the ether.*

The heaven-dwellers sing a song of praise and the universe enjoys golden peace.⁸⁰

The second scene (ill. 29) echoes the harmonic atmosphere of the previous composition, showing the vigorous figure of Neptune, the god of the sea, as he holds his emblematic Trident with his left hand and embraces the idealized body of his beloved wife, Amphitrite, with the other.

Once again, Goltzius focuses his attention on the tender, yet intense, game of glances that unites the mythological couple. Accompanied by two beautifully-carved dolphins that repeat a classical motif already adopted by Raphael in his *Galatea*, Neptune's body echoes the heroic forms of the *Torso Belvedere*, while his head unmistakably evokes the physiognomy of Michelangelo's *Moses*: a resemblance further emphasized by Amphitrite's gesture, as she delicately touches her husband's long, soft beard.

A master of metamorphosis, Goltzius creates his image through the appropriation and reinterpretation of well-known models, brilliantly conjugating his familiarity with ancient statues with his superlative knowledge of Italian Renaissance art. Curiously, the curly hair on the top of both mythological figures seems to suggest the spiral shapes of seashells: a most appropriate visual metaphor for two sea-related characters. Crowned by Love, Harmony reigns over the seas, as Franco Estius's verses declaim:

While blue-gray Amphitrite is set on kisses

*For the dark-blue Earth-shaker and is approaching
on tender creatures,*

The Aeolian storms stop, while the sea is settling down

And the calmed waves roam through quiet seas.

The third scene (ill. 30), depicting Pluto and Persephone, presents the most surprising iconography of the entire series. While the two previous engravings played with very standard motifs and borrowed from a repertoire of well-known visual codes and stylistic formulas, especially for an audience of well-educated sixteenth-century humanists, this composition displays, on the contrary, a rather rare, if not unique, narrative.

With remarkable dexterity, Goltzius represents a scene in which the main characters appear in an unusually peaceful, harmonic and loving interaction,

instead of following the much more widely diffused interpretation of the theme that centers on the violent kidnapping of Persephone by Pluto, the god of the underworld. In fact, as many sources recount, Persephone was carried off by force to Pluto's lower kingdom, whose entrance was guarded by the three-headed watchdog Cerberus, significantly present in the engraving right behind the shadow of its master.

Mimicking poses, settings and attitudes commonly used in the representations of Adam and Eve (including the motif of strategically located pruderies covering the genitalia), this engraving shows a statuesque Persephone looking intently at Pluto while stretching her arm out to reach the god's hand in a gesture of touching reconciliation. The physiog-



29. Hendrick Goltzius, *Neptune and Amphitrite*. Salem (OR), Hallie Ford Museum of Art



30. Hendrick Goltzius, *Pluto and Persephone*. Salem (OR), Hallie Ford Museum of Art

nomies of both characters – with their intense, arrow-like gazes – emphasize a clear feeling of mutual agreement.

Furthermore, with the exception of the burning scene in the background – plausibly alluding to Pluto’s realm – the whole composition suggests an atmosphere of newly established peace and harmony. Even the menacing instrument of Pluto’s actions – the double-pointed fork – now lies on the ground, almost forgotten, certainly neutralized in its ferocious implications. Where *Pax* rules, the fire no longer destroys. The verses written by Estius further elaborate on the conciliating tone that informs the image:

*When Persephone willingly smiles at the Lord of
the shades
And with an embrace enfolds him who drew the
third realm
Then right away Cerberus restrains his three mouths
And Rhadamanthus and Aecus sit idly, the voting
urn unmoved.*

Set together, these mesmerizing compositions engraved by Hendrick Goltzius present a wonderfully coherent and cohesive discourse, as they employ mythological narratives to promote moral reflections in which values such as Love, Union and Conciliation play a major role, with *Concordia* and *Harmonia*, comes *Pax*: a topic that Neostoic audiences would have certainly appreciated in late sixteenth-century Netherlands.

3.1. The Ethics of Faith:

Neostoicism in Sixteenth-Century Art and *Contubernium* as a Creative Paradigm

Conceived as visual discourses or symbolic constructions, images do not simply illustrate previously printed stories, such as biblical episodes or mythological tales, but create their own narratives. Therefore, images can be as emotionally moving and intellectually stimulating as texts. This idea – systematically widespread amongst humanists, artists, and patrons since the Italian *Quattrocento* – became a crucial theme of

debate in sixteenth-century Europe, especially after the theological and cultural clash provoked by the Reformation, on account of which relevant questions concerning the nature and the power of images were once again vehemently addressed by philosophers as well as artists.

This debate will find particularly receptive territories in sixteenth-century Antwerp and Amsterdam, two of the wealthiest and most stimulating centers of art, printmaking, and book production in Europe, including the making of exquisite Bibles.⁸¹ From a confessional perspective, these communities were far from being uniform: Catholics and Protestants, especially Lutherans and Calvinists, but also Mennonites and Jews lived side by side. In such an environment, it is not surprising that publishers and engravers “were reticent about their own religious inclinations and marketed their works to both Catholics and Protestants,” as scholar James Clifton comments.⁸² As a consequence, “religious prints are largely devoid of explicit confessional markers; they draw on scriptural sources and focus on universally palatable moral and devotional themes that might appeal to as broad an audience as possible.”⁸³

In this context, artists could find a promising source of inspiration in the philosophical writings associated with the movement known as Neostoicism, given its focus on ethical matters combined with an extensive use of biblical parables and *exempla*.⁸⁴ Based on the texts of ancient Stoics – such as Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius – this cultural phenomenon was largely diffused in the Netherlands and Flanders, in virtue of the presence of the already mentioned philosophers, Justus Lipsius and Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert.⁸⁵ In regard to their association with the sixteenth-century art world, it is important to emphasize, first of all, that both philosophers entertained close relationships with artists of their own time: while Lipsius was a good friend of Peter Paul Rubens’ brother, Philip,⁸⁶ Coornhert was highly regarded as an engraver who, after being trained by Maarten van Heemskerck, would become, in turn, the beloved master of Hendrick Goltzius.⁸⁷

Furthermore, art and philosophy could become equally effective means to shape, criticize, and also

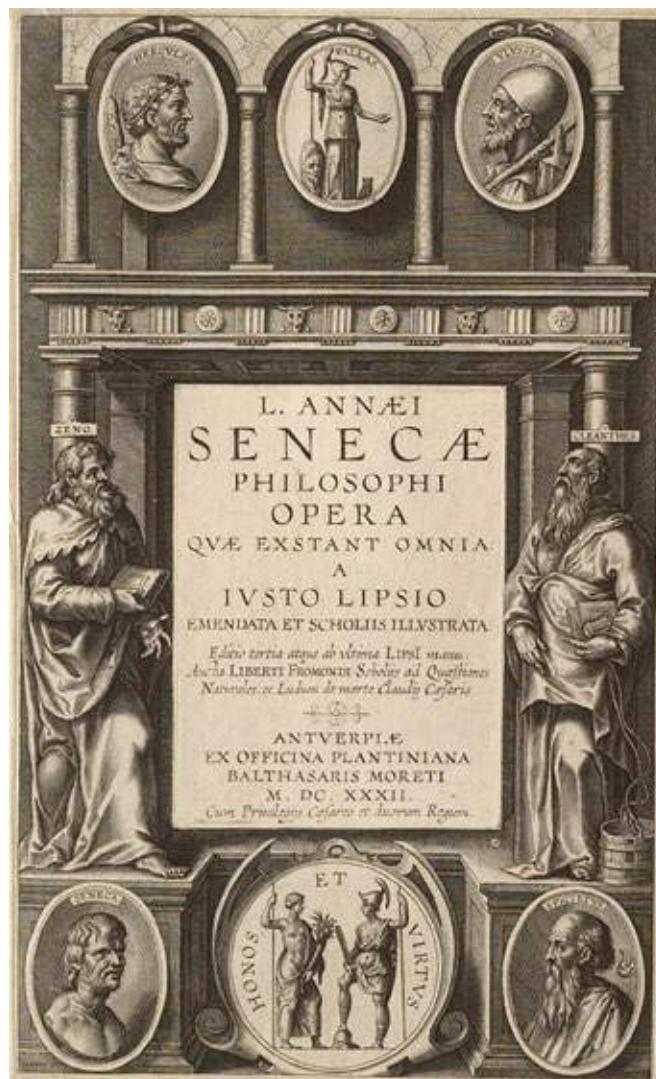
disseminate society's most relevant norms, beliefs, and ideas. In fact, in their books or translations from ancient authors (ill. 31), Lipsius and Coornhert reflected upon intellectual tenets that could, on the one hand, be applied in the moral sphere and conciliated, on the other, with Christian beliefs, elaborating a system that may be rightfully called an "Ethics of Everyday Life." In these reflections, not only art and philosophy walked hand in hand, but also images and words were considered similarly effective vehicles to express values and thoughts. As a matter of fact, one of the most striking features of this philosophical approach is, indeed, its programmatic practicality. The purpose of Neostoic thinkers, such as Lipsius and Coornhert, "was to adapt Roman Stoicism to the realities of life in the sixteenth century,"⁸⁸ as Mark Morford asserts.

The engravings inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible offer a very compelling example of such a methodic attempt at "actualizing" past principles and applying them within the flux of contemporary life, for they establish a very smooth, reciprocal, and mutually influential relation with the biblical passages they are expected to illustrate. Interpreted from a Neostoic perspective, one could even talk about the "friendship" that unites these images to the words from the Bible they refer to, and vice-versa.

The choice of this expression – "friendship" – is not casual. On the contrary, it intentionally borrows one of the most celebrated values among ancient Stoics or early modern Neostoics. In their writings, the theme of friendship – its definition, conditions, and myriad of implications – emerges with stunning consistency, especially in the pages of Justus Lipsius, where it appears in close connection with the Roman notion of *contubernium*. Originally, this concept was "a military term for sharing a tent (*taberna*) on campaign, then extended to the relationship of an inexperienced person living with and learning from an older man on campaign."⁸⁹

Very soon, however, the notion of *contubernium* came to encompass also non military aspects of friendship. Among Roman intellectuals, for instance, as Mark Morford sustains in his excellent study on this topic, "the word signified continuous and daily contact resulting in the mutual im-

provement of the *conturbenales* morally and intellectually."⁹⁰ The closeness of such a relationship, the scholar stresses, "is shown by the emphasis upon unity" and "it involves right choices and is suitably described by metaphors of straightness and harmony;" in conclusion, it entails "a true sharing."⁹¹ Significantly, the concept of friendship as "a true sharing" value that leads to the transformation of oneself and, ultimately, to the improvement of the entire society ("for the greater good of society" is, in fact, a leitmotiv in Stoic and Neostoic reflections) appears also in a letter written by ancient poet and philosopher, Seneca, in which one may read the following sentences:



31. Justus Lipsius, Title Page of *Senecae Philosophi Opera* (Antwerp, 1632). Amsterdam, Private collection

The sound of my voice [Seneca claims] and my companionship will do you more good than a sermon. You ought to be present, first, because men trust what they see rather than what they hear; second, because long is the path of learning by means of rules, short and effective by means of examples.⁹²

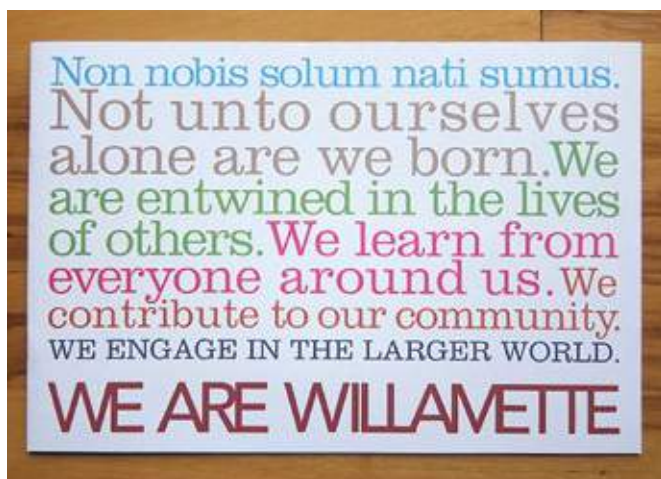
Metaphorically, these statements describe perfectly well also the dynamics that one can notice between words and images in the context of the Hexham Abbey Bible. The concept of *contubernium* could be used, in fact, to define the profound, intertwined, and mutually enlightening relationship that unites the biblical narratives and the engravings assembled in this stunning volume. Whether one starts by reading the text and, then, looks at the images or, on the opposite, examines the illustrations first and, in a second moment, directs his or her attention toward the text, does not change the important fact that words and images establish a most symbiotic exchange to the point of becoming equally persuasive – and pervasive – mirrors of the religious narratives they refer to.

Furthermore, as Seneca had suggested in the letter mentioned above, the concrete presence of one’s voice in a conversation performs like a most vivid image in the process of communication, for they both set before one’s eyes – concretely or metaphorically – a tangible presence, a palpable fact,

doing so with compelling immediacy. The actions or discourses provided by a “friend” can become, in this way of thinking, highly instructive “examples” to listen to, learn from, and then follow. In order to do so, the best method is to have this *exemplum virtutis* set “always before our eyes” (*semper ante oculos*),⁹³ as Lipsius claims, using a metaphor that sounds very similar to Comenius’ remarks examined above, on the centrality of visual evidence as a form of first-hand experience for the beholder, citizen, believer.

Therefore, one could argue that the set of images inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible activate an incessant “conversation” with the biblical passages they appear next to, creating a symbolic “tent” (*taberna*) or, to use a Postmodern expression, a “net” of connections, thanks to which a solid, but also reciprocally transforming “friendship” is established. Thus conceived, in accordance with a Neostoic horizon of references, the notion of friendship – i.e., *contubernium* – may be productively applied in the hermeneutic context of the Hexham Abbey Bible in order to characterize the singular amalgamation of words and images, text and pictures in a volume that – one should constantly stress it – was not originally printed with, or planned to contain, any illustration. In this portable *contubernium*, the friendly association of (sixteenth-century) engravings and (seventeenth-century) text pages becomes the ultimate sign of uniqueness of this magnificent volume.

In conclusion, for both Stoic as well as Neostoic philosophers, the notion of *contubernium* entailed moral improvement as its most prominent goal. Likewise, in the metaphorical “friendship” between images and words in the Hexham Abbey Bible, to attain such a moral and spiritual improvement was certainly one of the main purposes of its compiler. By putting together texts and illustrations under the protective umbrella of this printed *contubernium*, the compiler might have anticipated the powerful effects that such a “conversation” between iconic and verbal signs could have had upon his audience and how effectively this intersemiotic exchange could have improved personal as well as collective worship practices and catechetical functions.



32. Motto of Willamette University

The goal of becoming virtuous, or spiritually purified, was not conceived as an essentially individual mission but, on the contrary, as an important collective goal, given that, as Mumford insightfully remarks, the *contubernium* “was ultimately meant to benefit society,”⁹⁴ in consonance with the Stoic belief that in friendship all is shared. Accordingly, for Justus Lipsius and his Neostoic fellows, “he who loves himself, that is, who makes himself good and wise, this man also loves other men in this way: «not for himself alone, but for the whole world does he believe he was born».”⁹⁵ A sentence – very similar to the motto *Non nobis solum nati sumus*, that is, “Not unto ourselves alone are we born” (ill. 32) – that will sound extremely familiar to a Willamette University audience.

3.2. Rome Sweet Home: Rethinking the Paradigm of “Romanism” in Sixteenth-Century Northern Art

In addition to the moral and social implications of the concept of *contubernium* examined in the previous chapter, it is possible to extend the semantic boundaries of this term in order to encompass also artistic phenomena and, more specifically, matters pertaining to what could be called “the phenomenology of the style” in the Northern Renaissance and Mannerism. In the world of sixteenth-century art, images were produced out of a complex process that integrated acts of perception, moments of interpretation, and procedures of transformation of well-established models, observed “from life” (*nae het leven*) or recreated on the basis of one’s “own spirit” (*uyt den gheest*), as Van Mander clarifies.⁹⁶ In this sense, every art-related *imago* entails a – more or less calculated, conscious, and sometimes programmatic – “conversation” with previous *imagines*, thus suggesting, metaphorically, the existence of an internationally-wide visual *contubernium*. If Renaissance artists had concentrated their attention mainly on the study of samples offered by Antiquity, sixteenth-century masters – usually referred to as “Mannerists” – will definitely dilate their horizons of possibilities up to include, in their grid of potential “friends,” forms

from the past as well as models from the present. Contemporary art becomes, thus, a most vivid and valid source for future creations.

To fully understand this significant shift in the history of art, culture, and taste – from Renaissance to Mannerism to put it in a historiographical perspective – one must keep in mind that, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the boundaries of what we called a “creative *contubernium*” tended to coincide with the – geographical, cultural, and linguistic – perimeters of one’s own workshop.⁹⁷ This explains the stylistic proximity that one may notice among works produced within the same *bottega*. Out of Giotto’s workshop, quite predictably, Giottesque artists were formed. In other words, the models that were expected to be emulated were the forms created by one’s own master. In this potentially stagnant scenario, travels represented, of course, one of the few possibilities to increase one’s net of relations and get acquainted with other styles.⁹⁸

Such a tendency, very common among early fifteenth-century workshops, will be challenged rather drastically from the second half of the *Quattrocento* and significantly changed throughout the following century. For the most part, in fact, artists known as Mannerists – like Raphael, Michelangelo, and Parmigianino in Italy, or Maerten de Vos and Maarten van Heemskerck in the Northern Europe – will consistently break what had become the too restrictive walls of the creative dimension and will search continuously for new styles, techniques, and working procedures. Instead of closing the doors of their workshops, sixteenth-century masters will open their horizons by traveling systematically toward foreign lands – going to Rome, Florence, and Venice, but also to Fontainebleau, Prague, and Madrid – in order to expose their minds and their eyes to different art traditions.

In this process of exposure and dialogue with other cultures, styles, and working methods, the concept of “imitation” plays an essential part. Through the study, selection, and reappropriation of previous models – culminating in their transformation into a personal visual vocabulary – an artist can finally find the most effective means to formulate the visual discourses he or she is commissioned to provide.



33. Hans Collaert after Maerten de Vos, *The Encounter of Christ and Zacchaeus* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

Significantly, Justus Lipsius addressed this important question in his reflections on the ethical – and aesthetic – values of style. He distinguished five essential features of style: *brevitas* (brevity), *perspicuitas* (clarity), *simplicitas* (simplicity), *venustas* (beauty), and *decentia* (adequacy)⁹⁹. Combined, these features will create a style that could promote “easy communication” and “easy conversation” in Justus’ views.

To attain this end, the writer or the artist must operate a well-selected *imitatio* of the various available models, preferably choosing – he sustains – among the authors of Antiquity, but in accordance with needs and prerogatives of the present. In this regard, Lipsius is crystal clear: “I define *imitatio* as the fitting adaptation [*aptam conformationem*] of our style to the style of the ancients and expressed in our way of writing.”¹⁰⁰. In other words, one must choose a model that may be functional to one’s own

time and personal inclinations in order to achieve an “*aptam conformationem*” between past forms of discursivity and the creation of current discourses. The best model is the one that “fits” better the current expectations and modes of expression. *Imitatio* entails, therefore, a process of discernment.

However, the imitation of adequate models alone cannot ensure the success of one’s creative enterprise for this process entails also components that cannot be taught. In Justus’ opinion, for instance, the fundamental category of *venustas* (beauty) cannot be determined by means of rules, for its definition lies, at least in part, on a certain way of fusing ingredients that is difficult to describe and, consequently, prescribe in its exact methods of elaboration. It is, in fact, a “talent,” that is to say, a quality naturally possessed: “I call it beauty when the style is altogether lively, vigorous, upright, and when it carries before



34. Raphael, *Christ's Charge to Peter*. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

a certain attractive gracefulness and elegance; this is generally the gift of nature.”¹⁰¹ In an eloquent sentence, Justus concludes that it can be found “in God and nature, not in Art” (*a Deo et a natura pete, non ab Arte*).¹⁰²

In order to get to know one’s own possibilities, it is necessary to undertake a period of apprenticeship. After being introduced to various techniques and gotten acquainted with all sorts of art-related issues, the young master must finally find his or her own style. At the conclusion of this period, the formative trip to Italy – and, in particular, the sojourn of study in Rome – will become a *condition sine qua non* throughout the sixteenth century before an artist could successfully reach the status of an accomplished master. Anticipating a cultural trend that will be known as the *Grand Tour* in the eighteenth century, traveling South became a basic moment if one

wanted to reach the “Temple of Fame,” significantly represented by sixteenth-century painters and writers on the top of a mountain.¹⁰³

Centers such as Antwerp, Fontainebleau, and Prague were among the most popular destinations of these “art travelers.” However, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, Rome had already become the “land of the Muses” in the collective imagination of Northern artists and patrons. Praised by Karel van Mander as “the universal school of Painting” (*de gemeen Schilder-school Room*),¹⁰⁴ Rome attracted legions of Flemish and Dutch artists who were eager to study *in situ* the monuments of Antiquity as well as the creations of Renaissance masters, especially those of Michelangelo, Raphael, and their followers. Around 1620, the community of foreign artists living in the city was so conspicuous that Giulio Mancini – a well-known art collector, author of the *Consid-*

erations on the Art of Painting – could not refrain from using disdainful words to criticize “these French and Flemish people who come and go as they please without following any rule!”¹⁰⁵

While living in Rome, many Northern artists – later referred to as “Romanists”¹⁰⁶ – sought to assimilate systematically, but also creatively reinterpret, the set of forms, canons, and iconographies established by Italian masters, introducing in their compositions new themes and unprecedented visual metaphors, mostly based on mythological narratives. Intricate spaces, complex architectural designs, and monumental human bodies depicted in complicated, artificial-looking poses (often following a scheme of representation known as *figura serpentinata*, or “serpentine figure”)¹⁰⁷ are usually indicated as some of the most recurrent features in works elaborated by Northern artists who spent their formative years in

Rome, like Maarten van Heemskerck and Michel Coxcie (1499-1592).

Many of the prints inserted into this volume display, in fact, stylistic and compositional elements that seem to be directly borrowed from Roman models. In the depiction of the biblical episode *The Encounter of Christ and Zacchaeus* (Luke 19:1-10) (ill. 33), carved by Jan Collaert after Maerten de Vos and published by Gerard de Jode around 1585, the powerful, yet well-arranged monumentality of the figures cannot be fully understood without the reference to models elaborated by Renaissance master, Raphael, especially in the cartoon representing *Christ’s Charge to Peter* (ill. 34), commissioned by Pope Leo X in 1515 to be woven into a tapestry to cover the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, in the scene dedicated to the story of *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*



35. Gerard de Jode, *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

(John 8:1-11) (ill. 35), the grandeur of the setting, with its distinctive twisted columns, as well as the arrangement of the characters in the foreground of the composition, displayed as in a vivid frieze, bring immediately to mind another cartoon created by the Renaissance master, namely the *Healing of the Lame Man* (ill. 36). Designed in Rome, these cartoons were sent to Brussels — the major center for tapestry production in sixteenth-century Europe — to be woven at the workshop of Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550). Here, Raphael's monumental drawings will soon become an inexhaustible source of motifs and stylistic components for Netherlandish artists. Thanks to the migration of these cartoons North of the Alps, Roman models became more easily accessible to Flemish and Dutch masters to study carefully and reinterpret them, according to their own creative agendas.

This explains the extensiveness with which Raphael's forms were disseminated in Northern Europe from the third decade of the sixteenth century onward. The cartoon designed by Raphael, depicting *St Paul Preaching in Athens* (ill. 37), offered to Netherlandish audiences a very innovative lesson in compositional methods: with its dynamic articulation of multiple spaces, introduced by large-scaled figures, strategically set in the foreground, and surrounded by refined Classicist architectures spread across the entire scene, this image captures the beholder's eyes and invites him or her to explore the stratified layers of the story. Gestures and poses further contribute to attract the viewers' attention, while directing their gaze toward the various episodes allocated within this simple, yet composite space. In the act of looking at an image such as Raphael's cartoon, time and space almost coincide.



36. Raphael, *Healing of the Lame Man*. London, Victoria and Albert Museum



37. Raphael, *St Paul Preaching in Athens*. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

This new mode of structuring the narrative in a complex, but also condensed space, set the basis for many compositions that would be created, in the near future, by Northern masters such as Gerard de Jode. In a scene depicting the *Parable of the Unmerciful Servant* (Mt 18:21–34) and, more specifically, the concluding part of the story with the *Servant in the Jail* (ill. 38), the artist offers an interesting reinterpretation of Raphael’s paradigm. In this allegory of forgiveness and moral (mis)behavior, a servant begs his master to accept a delayed payment of his debts, without punishing him or the members of his family. The master “took pity on him” and canceled his debts altogether. “But when the servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a

hundred silver coins.” Instead of following the charitable attitude of his master, he grabbed his fellow and menaced him savagely. The master, hearing about the deplorable behavior of his servant, “handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.”

De Jode interprets the scene in a very straightforward manner: the main figures are set in the foreground and are depicted with sharp contours. However, he adopts Raphael’s idea of a dynamic space and dilates the narrative locations in various smaller stages, showing, for instance, in the foreground, the main episode with the master and the servant about to be punished, while inserting secondary scenes in the background, such as the two servants chatting



38. Gerard de Jode, *Servant in the Jail* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

next to the window and the people sitting on the stairs in the upper right side of the composition, thus providing parallel stories and many details for the viewer to see and reflect upon.

This method of visual construction – based on the insertion of secondary episodes within the narrative in order to extend the space itself – is used in many other engravings now inserted into the “Museum of Sacred Prints” of the Hexham Abbey Bible. In a print characterized by stunning architectural settings, Gerard de Jode stages an emphatic narration of *Christ Healing a Man at the Pool of Bethesda* (John 5:1-9) (ill. 39). In the foreground, the miraculous event takes place, while in the background the artist inserts multiple stories and smaller episodes to

delight the spectator’s eyes and further enhance the discursive power of this image.

Undoubtedly, the presence in Brussels of Raphael’s cartoons stimulated the propagation of Classicist motifs and Roman-oriented modes of representation North of the Alps. However, the trip to Rome continued to be one of the most common aspirations among young Netherlandish artists. When Maarten van Heemskerck arrived in the Eternal City in 1532, to leave only in 1536, the town was about to re-emerge from its own recent ruins, after the traumatic events associated with the Sack of Rome in 1527.¹⁰⁹

Among the masters that Heemskerck could admire in Rome one may surely include Polidoro da Caravaggio (c. 1499-1543), one of Raphael’s most

talented collaborators, whose works could be seen in many locations. Unlike most creations made by his mentor, Raphael, and those made by Michelangelo, which decorated private houses or were displayed in places of limited access, the works by Polidoro could be found virtually everywhere in town, adorning the facades of many palaces. Hard to preserve, most of these magnificent decorations went irremediably lost or were severely damaged due to their long exposure to the action of weather conditions and the accumulation of pollution over the centuries. Nevertheless, a few examples of Polidoro's ornamentations can still be seen in their original site, such as the facade of Palazzo Ricci (ill. 40), completed around 1525: a very articulated visual narrative that certain-

ly attracted Maarten van Heemskerck's attention.¹¹⁰

Polidoro's use of linear, continual narratives, arranged in frieze-looking parades, seem to intelligently reinterpret a highly celebrated model from the past, namely, the decoration of the Trajan's Column, completed in AD 113 (ill. 41). Polidoro's facades explore a similar method of spatial construction. In spite of the flatness of the surface on which they are painted, the scenes are so vividly represented and dynamically rendered that their figures look as though they were actual bronze-cast or marble-made statues moving, with frantic naturalism, from one side to another. Individually, each scene offers a particular set of characters and entails specific narrative plots (ill. 42). Seen as a whole, Polidoro's facades assume the



39. Gerard de Jode, *Christ Healing a Man at the Pool of Bethesda* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

appearance of a gigantic interactive screen, in which many stories take place at once. Clear and, yet, overwhelming.

Such a new way of conceiving the space, in vibrant dialogue with the *historia*, did not go unnoticed among Italian as well as Northern artists. Maarten van Heemskerck, for instance, upon his return to the Netherlands created a series of prints whose compositions show a similar way of arranging the visual narratives, in the attempt to better conciliate the various moments of a story in accordance with the multiple temporalities of its unfolding. This is the case of some engravings later included in the Hexham Abbey Bible, in which the artist demonstrated his familiarity with Polidoro's method. In the de-

picture of episodes from the *Acts of the Apostles*, such as *The Election of Matthias* (ill. 43), *The Descent of the Holy Spirit* (ill. 44), and *Peter Preaching in Jerusalem* (ill. 45), Heemskerck separated the various segments of each story by means of a well calculated spatial fragmentation, adding, for example, in the background, smaller scenes that could visually dilate the temporal developments of the *historia* and further enrich its semantic implications as well.

The resulting images offer a concrete evidence, therefore, of the laborious process of study, selection, and deliberate transformation of models undertaken by Dutch and Flemish masters who had been exposed to the canons of Italian Renaissance art. Far from merely absorbing and indiscriminate-



40. Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Façade Decoration of Palazzo Ricci*. Rome, Palazzo Ricci

ly adopting Roman models, artists like Maarten van Heemskerck – the so-called “Romanists” – attempted to increase these schemes of representation, often reaching very different outcomes. By avoiding to elaborate a pedestrian imitation of the examples one could have found in Rome, these masters tried to create a distinctively Northern style, setting, in turn, paradigms of artistic excellency for the generations to come. Rome became *Fiamenga*, to paraphrase Giulio Mancini’s words.

In a few engravings inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible Classical, Classicist, or typically Roman Renaissance architectures seem to prevail over any other element within the composition. This is the case, for instance, of the beautiful settings carved by Gerard de Jode, around 1585, representing *The Pool of Bethesda* (John 5:1-9) (ill. 46), *Jews Throwing Stones at Christ* (John 10:31-32) (ill. 47), and *Peter Healing the Lame Man* (Acts 3:1-8) (ill. 48). Even in these examples, however, the Roman-looking architectures appear so drastically altered from the rigorous forms

that characterize their original models that one can immediately feel the Netherlandish flavor of these compositions.

Compared to the sober, well-balanced, and mathematically impeccable architectures depicted by an Italian Renaissance master – such as Baldassare Peruzzi (1481-1536) in the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* at the Church of Santa Maria della Pace in Rome (ill. 49)¹¹¹ – the Northern imprinting of the three engravings mentioned above emerges immediately and appear closer to the eclectic buildings elaborated by Bernard van Orley (ca. 1487-1541), such as in *The Virgin of Louvain* at Museo del Prado in Madrid or in *The Banquet of the Children of Job*. While Peruzzi’s architectures are firmly grounded in the territory of Classical paradigms, almost as though they were actual remnants of an ancient temple, in a balanced relationship with characters and animals that inhabit the scene, the far more imaginative and less archaeologically accurate buildings designed by De Jode in the Hexham prints show a sinuosity, a rhythm, and a frantic articulation of the space that reveal a reinterpretative mind at work, without the aesthetic anxiety to conform with the – Classical, Classicist, or Classicizing – models he is borrowing from. While Peruzzi’s image could be easily exchanged for a study realized by an archaeologist, De Jode’s more playful creations share the fascinated curiosity of an explorer moving inside a cave. Without a torch, but with awe.

All these considerations led us to make a final remark concerning the methodological consequences of this analysis. From a hermeneutic standpoint, the Dutch and Flemish engravings examined in the previous paragraphs exemplify quite clearly the critical limitations and the exegetic fallacies carried by the concept of “Romanism.” This notion, in fact, implies a rather passive role and a somewhat mechanical adoption of Roman models from the part of Netherlandish artists, which does not do justice to the selective, transformational, and reappropriative processes that the creation of these works entail. For this reason, scholar Ilja Veldman pointed out that, while the term “Romanism” had been frequently applied in the past, “it is now less often used [...] mainly because a more profound study of the work of indi-



41. *Column of Marcus Aurelius* (part.). Rome

vidual artists has led to more attention being given to their specific characteristics, while the diversity of their responses to Italian art has come to be more fully appreciated.”¹¹²

Prints such as the ones examined above illustrate the variegated ways in which Northern artists attempted to provide different reinterpretations of models, styles, and working procedures they might have so passionately studied while living near the banks of the Tiber. Thus conducted beyond the restrictive lens of the notion of “Romanism,” the analysis of these prints allows us to acknowledge, also, the emergence of another significant cultural and social phenomenon in sixteenth-century Netherlands, that is to say, the rising of a collective identity and a grow-

ing consciousness among Northern artists and patrons that they belonged to a distinct – yet, equally valid – artistic tradition, related but no longer subordinated to the canons of the Roman Renaissance.¹¹³

3.3. The Venetian Legacy:

Exploring the Concept of *Varietas* in Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Art

By the end of the sixteenth century, as we have explained, undertaking a trip to Italy had become a rather common practice among Northern artists, especially toward the end of their formative years. Although Rome used to be the most popular des-



42. Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Façade Decoration of Palazzo Ricci* (part.)

tinuation, given its unparalleled collections of ancient and Renaissance works, Venice assumed very soon a prominent position as well, attracting an increasingly large number of Flemish, Dutch, and German artists, who were eager to collaborate with one of the local workshops.¹¹⁴

For this generation of artists, the works created by masters like Titian (c. 1490–1576), Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594), and Jacopo Bassano (c. 1510–1592) had already become models of incomparable perfection, in dialogue – and, sometimes, also in striking contrast – with the images elaborated by Rome-based masters. Venice became the most promising alternative to Rome, as Karel van Mander did not neglect to stress in his *Book of Painting* – and, more specifically, in some verses of the so-called “Didactic Poem”

that introduces the entire volume – stating that “in Rome one can learn how to draw, in Venice one can learn how to paint.”¹¹⁵

Many other written sources pointed out that, while the training process usually adopted in sixteenth-century Rome tended to focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the study of the human figure, depicted in accordance with the mathematical rules of proportion and the canons of anatomical *decorum*, based on the examples of Antiquity, artists educated in Venice were generally exposed to a wider spectrum of styles, subjects, and techniques, which included the exploration of strikingly new methods of modeling and shading. Instead of concentrating their attention on the depiction of the human body, inserted within the calculated space of a well-com-



43. Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Election of Matthias* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*



44. Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Descent of the Holy Spirit from the Hexham Abbey Bible*



45. Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *Peter Preaching in Jerusalem from the Hexham Abbey Bible*



46. Gerard de Jode, *The Pool of Bethesda* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*



47. Gerard de Jode, *Jews Throwing Stones at Christ* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

posed *historia*, Venetian masters aimed to render, with analogous diligence and meticulousness, every element belonging to the natural world, giving tangible shapes to the representation of clouds, buildings, animals, and plants. While in Rome the study of anatomy constituted the “most excellent field of art,” in Venice, experienced painters as well as young apprentices would investigate the multiple aspects of reality, codifying accordingly a much more naturalistic style, which has attracted the interest of many Northern artists, such as Maerten de Vos (1532-1603).

As a direct consequence of this cultural divide, the canons of “beauty” promoted in Venice appeared more flexible and variegated than the Classicist principles diffused in Rome, where the works by Michelangelo, Raphael, and Polidoro da Caravaggio had set the parameters of highly idealistic

forms. For Venice-based masters, on the contrary, the concept of *varietas* – i.e., “variety” – provided a stimulating alternative to the Classicist tendencies and opened up a most enriching road of experimentation for Northern artists to follow and further expand.¹¹⁶

Interestingly, the search for *varietas* in sixteenth-century visual arts seems to reflect an essential, recurrent topic of discussion among Northern philosophers and intellectuals as well, concerning “the infinite power of God” in the Creation of the Universe. Comenius, for instance, explicitly connected the stunning variety of the visible world and the tantalizing multiplicity of natural forms with what he calls “a metaphysical force.”¹¹⁷ In an eloquent paragraph of *The Great Didactic* focusing on this very issue, Comenius asserts:



48. Gerard de Jode, *Peter Healing the Lame Man* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

Since Man was a corporeal being who needed a place to live in, a space to breathe and move around, where to find food to grow up and clothes to ornate himself, [God] made, in the lowest part of the world, a solid pavement, the earth: and provided air and water in it, and produced plants and animals of various shapes, not only to satisfy man's need but also for his pleasure. And, given that Man had been created according to His image, with intelligence, in order to provide food for his intelligence, He created, out of each one of these creatures, many and various species, so that this visible world could appear as a most resembling mirror of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God.¹¹⁸

From an art-related perspective, the notion of variety was also one of the most consistently used critical categories in Karel van Mander's descriptions of paintings, drawings, and prints created by Northern masters. Translated into early seventeenth-century Dutch with the expression *Verscheydenheyt*,¹¹⁹ the concept of variety informs Van Mander's very definition of *Schilderconst* – i.e., the “Art of Painting” – in comparison to its two major sources of inspiration, namely, the art of Antiquity and the models provided by the Italian Renaissance. In his opinion, what makes Northern art so special and clearly distinct from any other – previous or contemporary – cultural tradition laid in its constant search for “variety.” While the ancient *Pictura* aimed to represent the sphere of nature in all its visual richness, focusing however in the narration of complex *historiae*, the



49. Baldassare Peruzzi, *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*. Rome, Church of Santa Maria della Pace

Italian Renaissance practice of *Pittura* offered, on the other hand, a rather restrictive – and frankly limiting in Van Mander’s opinion – interpretation of the Classical legacy, centered exclusively on the study of human anatomy. Masters such as Michelangelo and Raphael, in fact, were criticized by the Flemish writer for having focused their attention essentially on the depiction of the body, undertaken in accordance with the canons of proportion and the paradigm of beauty borrowed from ancient models, forgetting, however, to explore any other field of visible world, such as animals, landscapes, fabrics.

In Van Mander’s historical account concerning the lives of Northern masters, the entire sphere of visibility becomes a potential model for the creation of

paintings, drawings, and prints. Therefore, the Netherlandish *Schilderconst* emerges, out of the pages of treatise, as the only artistic tradition that could be truly, rightfully, and legitimately indicated as the authentic heir of Antiquity. Both traditions – that is to say, the ancient and the Northern – searched to find appropriate means to translate into visual forms the whole world of nature. Consequently, finding the past meant, for Northern Renaissance artists, to admire nature at its best. The ancient masters provided, in fact, a depository of forms, figures, and phenomena that united the parameters of “resemblance” with the indispensable concepts of “selection” and “beauty.” Driven by these aesthetic premises, Van Mander argues that painters such as Jan van Eyck and Herri



50. Harmen Jansz. Muller after Maerten de Vos, *The Miracle of Christ on the Sea of Galilee* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

met de Bles as well as engravers of the ability of Albrecht Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, and Hendrick Goltzius have not only retrieved, but successfully brought to completion the ancient ideals of *universalitas* in life and *varietas* in art. The true Renaissance happened in the Netherlands.

Goltzius, in particular, seems to have embraced, more systematically than any other master of his time, the ancient project of translating the entire world of nature into the world of art. In addition, he extended the very boundaries of the visible world up to encompass every phenomenon of “visuality,” including in his list of potential art models also imitations of imitations, that is to say, representations of natural forms based on well-known styles, manners, and working procedures. Thus operating on a level of meta-representation or metalanguage, Goltzius could critically encapsulate previous images within his own creations. Far from being derivative, this method allowed the artist to reach a degree of intellectual planning and manual dexterity that would excite both his colleagues as well as patrons, commissioners, and collectors. It is no wonder, then, if Van Mander praises Goltzius for being a “Vertumnus and Proteus”¹²⁰ in the visual arts, describing the visual powers of his metamorphic manner with enthusiastic words:

From his youth, he sought not only to follow beauty, that is, the variety of natural forms (*verscheyden ghedaenten der Natuer*), but also



51. Tintoretto, *The Last Supper*. Venice, Church of San Giorgio Maggiore

strove to imitate the works of the best masters (*verscheyden handeligen der beste meesters*), such as Heemskerck, Frans Floris, Blocklandt, Frederick, and, lastly, Spranger, whose ingenious manner he emulated with utmost adequacy.¹²¹

Thanks to his Protean mind and metamorphic hands, Goltzius aimed to attain, in his compositions, faithful representations of natural forms as well as playful reinterpretations of art-created styles and techniques. Gifted with a prodigious manual skill and a most insightful wit, Goltzius fulfilled the mimetic goals that had been pursued by ancient masters, dilating, however, quite significantly the field of visual models that were available to the artists to emulate: more than a “mirror” of nature, his images condense the very history of ancient, Renaissance, and early seventeenth-century art. Art reflects art.



52. Enea Vico after Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*. Rome, Private collection

Coherently, one may conclude that the production of paintings and printed images in early seventeenth-century Netherlands followed a number of the aesthetic categories still tied to the mimetic reproduction of surrounding reality – such as “naturalness” and “resemblance” (already adopted by fifteenth-century artists) – but subjected also these same elements to rigorous formal scrutiny in an attempt to grasp the technical and stylistic specificities of the earlier images (a method consistently pursued by sixteenth-century masters). The deepest goal of a Mannerist artist no longer coincides with the imitation of natural forms: what counts the most, now, is the exposure, while creating one’s own image, of the various means involved in the production of that very image, from a technical, stylistic, and icono-

graphic standpoint. The mimetic operation shifted from the imitation of models (Renaissance) to an emulation of the process of imitation itself (Mannerism), so that the images thus elaborated will offer a creative and conceptual commentary of their own process of creation.

The models utilized by Mannerist masters will no longer belong exclusively to the sphere of *Natuer*, but, conversely, will be drawn from the entire legacy of images available to the artist, as part of the renewal mechanism of styles, methods and manners. Along with the need to refer to the repertory of forms offered by the phenomenal dimension, the sixteenth-century artist will also be conceded the possibility of looking to visual solutions transmitted by precedent artifacts, so that the mimetic reproduc-



53. Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Liberation of St Peter* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

tion process will be enhanced by the emergence of a new creative source: the artworks of the past. Thus, to the specularity of the fifteenth-century will be added the recapitulative citation, with its inescapable cache of “dexterity,” “skill,” and “virtuosity.” This new approach stresses the astonishing “variety” of the canons of perfection. Art is plural.

Within this extended horizon of experiences, the trip to Italy offered an important opportunity to enlarge one’s own parameters of reference. Once in Italy, artists could see and explore as many works as they wished to, trying to keep those forms alive in their memories as potential samples for the future. In the case of Goltzius, at his return from Italy,

firmly impressed in his memory as in a mirror were the lovely Italian paintings, so that he

could still see before him the delicate grace of Raphael, whom he admired so much, the soft naturalness of Correggio, the sculptural, luminous variations of Titian, with their smooth shadows, and the splendid fabrics and objects so well painted by Veronese and by other Venetian masters.¹²²

The paradigm of *varietas* stimulates masters such as Goltzius to continually explore different art forms, beyond the canonical exemplarity of Roman Renaissance models. As a matter of fact, in the list provided by Van Mander in the sentence above, it is highly significant that one may find, side by side with Raphael, the names of painters mostly belonging to the Venetian area. Tiziano Vecellio, Paolo Veronese, Jacopo Tintoretto and, in particular, Jacopo Bassano are



54. Jan Sadeler after Maerten de Vos, *The Creation of Animals*. Albany (OR), Collection of Historic Bibles & Engravings

frequently mentioned by Van Mander as examples of excellency in the art of painting. Moreover, their forms were not only admired, but attentively studied and reinterpreted by several late sixteenth-century Netherlandish masters. Finally, one should not neglect to mention the massive presence of Northern artists and apprentices in Venice since the first decades of the *Cinquecento*. In conclusion, Rome and Venice represented, *de facto*, the two most stimulating art markets in Italy for sixteenth-century artists-travelers to visit or settle in.¹²³ In an ideal genealogical chain, ancient Athens, modern Venice, and contemporary Antwerp, Haarlem, or Amsterdam could be set in a progressive line of continuation for they all aimed to capture the variety of the visible world through the *varietas, varietà* or *Verscheydenheyt* of art forms.

Many engravings inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible confirm this interpretive claim. In a composition dedicated to the biblical episode of *The Miracle of Christ on the Sea*, designed by Harmen Jansz Muller and published by Gerard de Jode around 1575 (ill. 50), the print offers an extremely dramatic interpretation of the scene narrated in the Gospel:

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying: «Lord, save us! We are going to drown!» (Matthew 8:23-25)



55. Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel, *Sloth (Desidia)*. New York, Private collection

Caught in the middle of a horrifying tempest, the boat is menaced by enormous sweeping waves and dark stormy clouds. While two semi-nude sailors search desperately to hold the veils of the boat, displaying their Michelangiolesque anatomies in almost contorted poses, the Apostles express their anxiety with such an *aplomb* that, in spite of the eloquence of their gestures, they maintain a decorous attitude. Christ, on the other hand, appears peacefully asleep on the right side of the vessel. Bodies, waves, and clouds; thunders, fabrics, and light effects: every element within the composition is treated with the same quotient of attention and descriptive meticulousness. The waves, for instance, seem truly “alive,” if one may use a recurrent fifteenth-century metaphor to describe images that look “more real than reality itself.”¹²⁴ The dynamic, yet attentive, rendering of hatchings; the insisted use of fragmented lines and wiggly shapes; the sharp contrast between illuminated areas and dark zones; the well-calculated arrangement of the figures in a stunning variety of attitudes; and, finally, the destabilizing diagonal in which the boat is represented enhance the emotional *pathos* that permeates this image as though it were truly traversed by the sounds of fury and the swells of destruction.

The *historia* is performed in a most vivid way. And, yet, the human figures can hardly be described as the most prominent features in this composition: along with the bodies, many other elements are ingeniously combined in order to create a compelling, frantic scene in contrast with the calm, almost oblivious attitude of Christ. Using a neologism invented by Karel van Mander in the Dutch idiom, one could describe De Jode’s interpretation of the biblical episode as “Tintorettesque” (*Tinturet-achtich*),¹²⁵ that is to say, very close to Tintoretto’s intense visual poetics (ill. 51). To put it another way, one could argue that, in this composition, waves and thunders, clouds and clothes are as central as the human characters for the convincing rendering of this dramatic narrative. The body is no longer the epicenter of the *historia*. Variety prevails.

In order to fully grasp the novelty of such an approach – in which every single element is depicted with analogous attention, without any hierarchical

distinction among bodies, fabrics, natural phenomena, etc. – it suffices to compare this work by De Jode with an engraved image reproducing Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, carved by Enea Vico (ill. 52). Whereas the print made by De Jode shifted its focus of attention from the human actions to the description of every component of the image as potential *dramatis personae* within the story, Enea Vico’s engraving repeats the most distinctive feature of its Roman model, that is to say, the centrality of the “anatomies” or, *notomie*, as Giorgio Vasari would say.¹²⁶

Hypnotic and breathtaking, Michelangelo’s powerful composition creates a vortex of emotions out of the unbridled multitude of bodies spread across the entire surface of the wall. No less powerfully, De Jode’s print employs every element from the natural world to express the intense contrast between Christ’s peaceful posture and the troubled “little faith” of his followers. If Enea Vico embodies the human-centered tradition of Renaissance Rome, De Jode embraces the Venetian legacy and explores the endless road of “variety.”

The paradigm of *varietas* – especially in its Northern acceptance of *Verscheidenheit* – refers not only to the wide morphology of elements represented in an image, but also implies a particular attention toward the different methods of pictorial rendering and printmaking procedures. Aside from exploring multiple topics and representing diverse forms with equal attention, Netherlandish masters followed the Venetian models also in their innovative methods of creating light effects, atmospheric settings, and vast, hazy landscapes.

In this regard, the interpretation of a composition originally designed by Maarten van Heemskerck, depicting *The Liberation of St Peter* (ill. 53), carved by Philips Galle around 1582, is particularly revealing. Notwithstanding the fact that the engraver was dealing with a model notoriously attached to Roman models (one may just recall the long permanence of Heemskerck in Italy), he was able to create an image in which a beautiful, well-shaded nocturnal effect is accompanied by a soft rendering of hatchings that gives a sense of incorporeal smoothness to the narrative. Even the monumentality of the figure, in the foreground, is overshadowed by the suspend-

ed atmosphere of the scene. In this print, the body appears suavely fused with any other element of the composition. Once again, variety prevails.

To conclude, one may correctly assert that the Venetian paradigm of “variety,” along with the ancient notion of *varietas*, set the conceptual as well as the technical, stylistic, and iconographic basis for the Northern pursuit of *Versheydenheyt*: a notion that will ultimately lead the artists to attain an all-encompassing mimesis, as metaphorically suggested in a print carved by Jan Sadeler after Maerten de Vos, depicting the *Creation of Animals* (Genesis 1:20-25) (ill. 54). In this rich, fascinating image – characterized by the *horror-vacui* treatment of a space filled with all sorts of (natural? fantastic? primal?) presences – the artists demonstrate the wide extension of their mimetic abilities, imitating every single animal and form from nature (or imagination) with meticulous resemblance (or believable verisimilitude). At the same time, they manifest also their respect to and familiarity with well-known art forms from the past, borrowing from Venice the smooth atmosphere that permeates the landscape, while refreshing the memory of Northern beholders, with a touch of delightful irony, thanks to the addition of a few “gracious monsters” in the foreground, which cannot but bring to mind – at least among the members of a “learned” audience – Hieronymus Bosch’s eccentric inventions and Pieter Bruegel’s nightmarish images *moralisées* (ill. 55).

The engravings assembled in the Hexham Abbey Bible can be associated, therefore, with highly significant tendencies of the Northern Mannerism, documenting some of the most important trends and styles that flourished in the Netherlands throughout the sixteenth century. Furthermore, it documents, with equal richness, the creative exchange among artists from the Northern tradition and masters belonging to different times and geographical areas. In the gallery collected within this stunning “Museum of Sacred Prints,” one may find, in fact, Dutch and Flemish forms in a ceaseless dialogue with the images created by Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, and Tintoretto, standing side by side as the guests of an universal symposium of harmony, thus embracing the ideal of liberality, tolerance, and diversity envi-

sioned by one the greatest writers and philosophers of the European Renaissance: Desiderius Erasmus, alias Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536).

By reinterpreting forms originated in different dimensions (either natural or imaginary) and taken from various cultural contexts (Venice as well as Rome, Vienna, or Prague), the Netherlandish concept of *Versheydenheyt* entails an all-encompassing creative agenda that meets at the fullest the meta-representational goals of this increasingly self-conscious art tradition. Moreover, this extended attention toward every component of the sphere of visibility – from animals to plants, from clouds to human bodies – certainly contributed to the development of another important genre of representation, in which Flemish and Dutch masters will truly distinguish themselves throughout the sixteenth century: Landscape art.

3.4. Facing North:

Landscape as a Distinctively Netherlandish Field of Representation

The modern English term Landscape derives from the Dutch word *Landschap*, which received its earliest definition within an art historical discourse in 1604, in the *Book of Painting* written by Karel van Mander. In fact, one of the most relevant chapters of the so-called “Didactic Poem” that opens Van Mander’s volume is significantly dedicated to *Van het Landschap*, that is, “On the Landscape.”¹²⁷ Conceived as an autonomous field, focusing on the depiction of natural elements organized within a vast space or a circumscribed perimeter, detached from any textual references (except the image itself), landscape painting was already perceived, by the end of the sixteenth century, as a distinctively Northern territory of visual representation.

Although it is possible to find many landscapes in fifteenth-century Italian paintings, like the famous background of *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci (1454-1519), it is only around 1500, in Germany, that artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480-1538) realized what could be truly called the first “pure landscapes,” that is, depictions

of natural settings that are “unjustified by emblemata, figures, or narrative, and filled instead with almost expressionistic scenes of Northern forest or woodland pond,” as scholar Christopher Fitter affirms.¹²⁸

Further developed by Flemish artists throughout the sixteenth century – it suffices to mention the magnificent “World Landscapes” (or *Weltlandschaften*) created by Joachim Patinier (c. 1480–1524) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–1569) in Antwerp (ill. 56)¹²⁹ – this field of representation would gradually become the symbol of the new sense of collective consciousness attained by Netherlandish artists and patrons during the Renaissance. While Italian masters tended to conceive their images primarily as visual translations of textually-based *historiae*, Northern artists aimed at exploring, on the contrary, the countless variety of phenomena, forms, and elements

belonging to the natural world, without subordinating them to any previously established narrative. Enthusiastically, Van Mander reported that, among his contemporaries, “Netherlandish artists are usually praised for their landscape paintings, while Italians are celebrated for their representations of figures and divinities.”¹³⁰

It is precisely the absence (or the diminished role) of such a rigid frame of textual reference – or *historia* – that will allow landscape to become gradually an autonomous field of artistic experimentation, partly freed from the ideological as well as the formal constraints that used to define the boundaries of other genres, such as portraiture, history painting, and religious imagery.

In strict sense, among the prints assembled in the Hexham Abbey Bible, there are no “pure landscapes.”



56. Johannes and Lucas van Doetecum after Pieter Bruegel, *Alpine Landscape*. New York, Private collection

In fact, the engravings inserted into this volume are always related, if not subordinated to the biblical stories they refer to. It is possible to find, while turning the pages of this remarkable volume, many scenes representing carefully described interiors (ill. 57) – in which the material culture of sixteenth-century Netherlands emerge in all its tangibility – as well as compositions set in sharply outlined “urbanscapes” (ill. 58), but no independent landscapes. Some of its engravings, however, document significant stages in the gradual development of sixteenth-century landscape as a distinctively Northern art form. Although these images appear tied to characters and motifs pertaining to specific narratives, they reveal, nevertheless, a new manner of organizing the composition that tends to enhance the multiple temporalities of

the viewers’ gaze and stimulate them to extend the length of such a visual experience, while moving their eyes across the multilayered spaces of the image.

This description seems to capture the phenomenology of perception that is activated while observing a print carved by Gerard de Jode, representing the *Flight into Egypt* (ill. 59). The space is organized in a way that leads the eyes of the spectator to follow the very path traveled by the main characters of the scene, St Joseph holding the donkey on which the Madonna sits while feeding the baby. Deprived of halos, the sacred couple looks like peasants in disguise. Iconographically, the scene seems at first a mere depiction of a *tranche de vie*, a slice of life so to speak. After a while, however, the attentive viewer would grasp just how *tranchant* is, in fact, this scene...



57. Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Healing of Eneas by St Peter* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

The only presence that sheds – literally – light on the mystic, metaphysical nature of this apparently quiet journey is the little *personage* depicted on the right side of the composition, on the top of the tree, holding a stick in his left hand and displaying the symbolic image of a sun on his head, as a luminescent hat. Otherwise, the tone of the engraving, along with the characterization of both figures and space, is rather naturalistic.

From a compositional standpoint, the (various) scene(s) depicted in this print are arranged in accordance with a sharp divide, structurally marked by the diagonal line that splits the image in two parts: in the foreground, in an area characterized by a sharper, more intense, and incisive use of parallel hatchings, the holy couple continues their journey, as though nothing could prevent them from moving forward, toward the right; in the background, a vast landscape

is represented by means of lighter and thinner lines that convincingly render the sense of distance from the spectator's point of view; in this almost vanishing space, a harvesting scene takes place, while two soldiers riding horses can be seen mid-way between the corn field and the village, surmounted by a castle on the peak of a mountain.

Aside from this *chiaroscuro*-based separation between the two segments of the narrative – the monumental foreground and the fading background – successfully achieved thanks to the calculated use of light effects and the variable hatching procedures, the image shows also other forms of contrast, provided, however, that the viewers pay the necessary attention and observe, patiently, also the tiniest details of the composition. In that case, they will soon find out, while moving their eyes across the image, that, what might have appeared at



58. Gerard de Jode, *Jesus and Zacchaeus* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

first another group of peasants at work, in the area between the corn field and the village, are, in fact, the almost imperceptible, and yet terrifying, silhouettes of a murderer soldier and his victim. The soldier's gesture mimics so closely the movement of the two peasants harvesting the field that it is easy to get confused and misinterpret the very nature of his action: only through a patient scrutiny will the viewer be able to understand the terrible act he is performing. In other words, the space of the representation is conceived in a way that plays with the (always variable) degree of attention held by the spectators, orienting their gaze in an effort to dilate – or anticipate – the multiple temporalities of this visual narrative.

Thus elaborated, the space acquires an important semantic function and becomes the vehicle through

which it will be possible to entertain ceaseless semiotic interactions with the beholder, configuring itself as a “symbolic form” to use Erwin Panofsky's interpretive paradigm.¹³¹ In this particular engraving, the space carved by Gerard de Jode stages the dichotomy between death and life, punishment and liberty by separating two areas in the print. Moving from the fading distance to a more tangible present, the holy couple leaves the troubled area of the left (danger, violence, and death) to move quietly, humbly, and yet confidently toward the right (safety, peace, and life). Significantly this direction is suggested by the metaphorical figure on the tree, whose light seems to anticipate the “source of light” that comes from the right corner of the image. As a matter of fact, the tree itself becomes a relevant signifier of Salvation, with its luxuriant branches and florid lymph set



59. Gerard de Jode, *Flight into Egypt* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible*

in opposition to the dead fragment of trunk represented in the foreground. Nothing to fear: the holy couple will safely reach its destination in spite of the disquieting menace of the soldiers left behind. Light stands ahead.

3.5. Moralized Prints:

The Function of Allegories and Visual Parables in Biblical Images

Interestingly, in the *corpus* of engravings inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible, most of the images in which landscapes are depicted with a certain prominence are allegorical scenes, metaphorical parables, or moralized narratives. Throughout the sixteenth century, landscapes will become a very functional space where to locate a *historia* and, consequently, will turn out to be one of the most common carriers of symbolic meanings and *moralisée* narratives in Northern art. As we have examined above, in Gerard de Jode's depiction of the *Flight into Egypt*, the very articulation of the space and the potential dislocation of its characters from left to right performed as a visual device to compel the viewer to acknowledge the presence of a particular message: the safety of the holy couple was somehow inscribed within the very semiotic codes with which the image was constructed. These elements, however, require both attention and curiosity from the spectator's side to be not just understood, but even perceived. The medium was, indeed, the message.¹³²

Likewise, images whose constitutive elements seem at first ambiguous, enigmatic, and "difficult" to grasp, or blatantly out of the norm, were often used by Renaissance and Mannerist artists as iconic devices designed with the strategic purpose of capturing the beholder's eyes and mind. Given their obscurity, these images challenged the very act of perception, stimulating the viewer to search for meanings beyond, behind, between the sphere of literal signification and, thus, performing *de facto* the function of a "reader," a visual interpreter. One could claim therefore that, during the exegetic process, images and words become potentially meaningful "signs" or carriers of new directions of

"discursivity."¹³³ Words and images appear inextricably entangled in the language of the Bible, with its metaphors and symbolic constructions, but their symbiosis emerge also as a most characterizing feature of sixteenth-century prints and engravings, such as the ones assembled within the Hexham Abbey Bible.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This famous sentence from the Bible significantly places emphasis on the metaphorical value of language as a vehicle thanks to which the reader/believer may reach deeper truths and access metaphysical revelations during the interpretive – or exegetic – process. In such a spiritual context, interpreting means learning; learning, in turn, may help one finding his or her path of salvation. However immediate a sentence might appear in the Sacred Scriptures, it has always the power of referring to another dimension and unveiling a myriad of symbolic meanings. Words and images are polysemic.

Given the complexity of the biblical language, Dante Alighieri (c. 1265–1321) – author of the *Divine Comedy* – outlined in his book *Il Convivio*, or *The Banquet*,¹³⁴ a method of textual interpretation that aims to uncover four levels of meaning:

1. Literal ("the sense that does not go beyond the surface of the letter");
2. Allegorical (which shows the "truth hidden beneath a beautiful fiction");
3. Moral ("the sense that teachers should intently seek to discover");
4. Anagogical (which "occurs when a scripture is expounded in a spiritual sense").

Artists who were asked to illustrate stories from the Bible had to face a similarly challenging process of symbolic representation in order to create visual narratives that could give shape to beings, forms, and phenomena that did not belong to the natural world, but could, nevertheless, become "visible" and "meaningful." The more convincing and compelling one image would appear, the more effectively it could convey the multiple senses encompassed in a biblical episode, facilitating its apprehension (Di-

dactic function), memorization (Mnemonic task) and dissemination of ethical implications (Moral purpose).

Allegories, parables, and metaphors have been recurrent features in this process of “moralization” of the Scriptures.¹³⁵ Thanks to this complex system of analogies and correspondences, one narrative may be read in many different ways and, accordingly, be interpreted on the basis of various hermeneutic procedures. In a context such as late sixteenth-century Flanders and Netherlands – characterized by fervid religious debates and sharp confessional divisions¹³⁶ – the art market had to respond to the demands, needs, and expectations of patrons belonging to diverse religious communities – like Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, and Mennonites – living within the same geographical area. Images and words, therefore, were not only applied with particular caution, but also designed with the strategic intention of opening variable semantic possibilities.

The reciprocal interaction of words and images characterizes also another very common form of visual discourse in sixteenth-century Europe: the Emblems. In the works created within the “Emblematic Tradition,”¹³⁷ the same image may become the vessel of a wide spectrum of ideas and values, on account of its intricate fusion with verbal signs. Consequently, the hermeneutic process will be often focused on the analysis of the potential meanings conveyed by an image, in search of what art historian, Erwin Panofsky, has called the “disguised symbolism” of a certain iconography.¹³⁸ For this reason, allegorical images will frequently depict familiar objects and natural-looking figures side by side with unusual, bizarre and sometimes blatantly grotesque elements, in order to continuously stimulate the viewer to seek for unveiled levels of signification in a work. Seeing is searching.

Some of the engravings inserted into the Hexham Abbey Bible clearly hold allegorical implications, which, in turn, intended to offer a “lesson” about the world, associated with biblical parables and ethical principles, presented in a *moralisée* – or moralizing – perspective. This is the case, for instance, of a composition carved by Gerard van Groeningen and published by Gerard de Jode around 1585, rep-

resenting the *Parable of the Wheat and Tares* (ill. 60), the story of a Demon who, while the workers were sleeping, sowed weeds among the wheat, as narrated in the Gospel:

[Christ] put another parable before them, saying, «The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’» (Matthew 13:24-30)



60. Gerard de Jode after Gerard van Groeningen, *The Parable the Wheat and Tares* from the *Hexham Abbey Bible* (part.)

The space in the engraving is organized as a theatrical stage on which the sleeping characters appear arranged in a circular shape that visually frames the whole composition. At the very center, the figure of the “enemy” – depicted as a hybrid creature not dissimilar from a standing chimera – throws the weeds among the wheat as the Latin inscription – *Dum dormiunt Homines inimicus zizania interserit tritico* – further clarifies. The “evil” nature of this figure is semiotically expressed through the “composite” aspect of the “codes” with which its body is represented, in a form that resembles a surrealist collage of random elements. Thus constructed, the body of the “enemy” conciliates a rather naturalistic rendering of certain anatomical parts with disquietingly fantastic components, such as the bird claws, the pointed paws, and the wild-boar-looking face. His or her “difference” marks the “evil” contours of his or her mixed, “unorthodox” being.

On the other hand, the human figures sleeping on the edges of the image fully demonstrate the familiarity of the artist with models created by Flemish master, Frans Floris (1517–1570), which were, in turn, further reelaborations on Raphael’s and Michelangelo’s styles, directly observed in Rome during a trip undertaken between 1542 and 1545.¹³⁹ The various poses of these figures, the classicizing flavor of their clothes, and, finally, the systematic use of challenging foreshortenings in the making of the bodies reveal the “Romanist” tendencies of this master, who was able, however, to balance such a clear predilection for “anatomies” with a rather naturalistic characterization of the rural setting, thus showing also his ability to create a convincing space by means of an attentive shading of lights and shadows, smoothly fading the thickness of the parallel, or slightly curvilinear, hatchings from the foreground (more incisively marked) to the background (almost imperceptibly carved).

The adoption of strikingly unnatural forms or fantastic elements, such as the “evil enemy” depicted in this engraving, activates a semiotic process that aims to inform the viewer about the presence of pertinent codes of communication (grotesque=evil). What is represented before the eyes of the beholder exceeds the mere sphere of life, thus inviting him or her consider not only the literal levels of signifi-

cation (bodies, trees, houses), but also the symbolic layers of meaning (evil, good, guilt, sin).

After all, this exegetic approach was adopted by Christ himself, according to the narrative of the Gospels, in reference to His frequent habit of communicating thoughts by means of parables, symbols, and metaphors. As a matter of fact, right after Jesus had told the *Parable of the Sower*, one of His followers could not refrain from asking Him:

“Why do you speak to them in parables?”

And He answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’

For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matthew 13:10–17)

By offering lessons filled with colorful images and enticing words, Christ’s parables followed a method of representation that we could define, in a Postmodern perspective, an “intersemiotic” approach for it mixes signs and codes pertaining to different spheres within the same message making path. Likewise, the production of sixteenth-century Northern prints entailed processes of creation

– and, afterward, corresponding models of interpretation – in which words and images were called to play the most prominent parts. Due to our hermeneutic gap and unavoidable historical distance in respect to the original contexts in which those images and teachings had been first conceived and disseminated, our minds “have grown dull” over time and our eyes “have closed,” to paraphrase the evangelical expressions mentioned above. In the attempt to warm up our minds and open wide our eyes, we interpret these visual poetics and verbal constructions beyond their more immediate, literal, and reachable sense. Thus, we may also understand how the reception of these vehicles of culture, knowledge, and religious beliefs have changed over time. This is, in fact, one of the most promising lessons taught by Christ as St Paul states: because we are no longer living in the proximity of Paradise, “now we see only a reflection as in a mirror” (*Videmus*

nunc per speculum in aenigmate, I Corinthians 13:12).

Created by God and, metaphorically, shaped by Words and Images, the World seals, conceals, and also reveals many enigmas for those who know how to read – or to seek – them. One should not be surprised, therefore, if a learned seventeenth-century interpreter of the Bible such as Jan Amos Comenius – a man, we must not forget, who was in close relationship with the compiler of the Hexham Abbey Bible, Rev. Ritschel – asserted in his main publication, *The Great Didactic*, that “everything, from the lesser to the more important, said and done by Christ, as well as every single comma in the Sacred Scriptures, contain a mystery for our instruction.”¹⁴⁰ Similarly to the World, the Bible teaches many lessons, if only one knows how to investigate its endless mysteries. One has to open one’s mind, ears, and eyes. Then, as my American friends would say, one must just “watch and learn.”

Notes

1. *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments: and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England, with the Psalter or Psalmes of David. Printed by Thomas and John Buck, Printers to the University of Cambridge, Anno Dom. MD-CXXIX.* This remarkable volume – called in this exhibition the “Hexham Abbey Bible” – as well as the engravings displayed in the exhibition *Holy Beauty* belong to Dr. Bruce T. Martin, founder of Historic Bibles & Engravings.

2. This colorful expression was borrowed from Jan Amos Comenius, see note 43.

3. Most of the prints belong, in fact, to two major series published by Philips Galle in 1582 (*Acta Apostolorum*) and by Gerard de Jode in 1585 (*Thesaurus Novi Testamenti elegantissimis iconibus expressus continens historias atque miracula do[m]ini nostri Iesu Christi*). On Galle’s series, see New Hollstein (Dutch and Flemish) 219. II. On Jode’s series, see Hans Mielke, *Der Thesaurus Veteris et Novi Testamenti des Gerard de Jode*, in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 1975, pp. 29–83; and also New Hollstein (Dutch and Flemish) 108. II (Gerard van Groeningen) and New Hollstein (Dutch and Flemish) 49. I (The Muller Dynasty, Harmen Jansz Muller).

4. For a scholarly introduction to the history of the Bible see Roland S. Werner, *Our Book. The Story of the Bible from Moses to the Moon*, Museum of the Bible, Exhibition Catalog: 24 May–10 September 2017. Wittenberg: Museum of the Bible,

2017. On the production of Bibles in England, in particular, see Donald L. Brake, *A Visual History of the English Bible: The Tumultuous Tale of the World’s Bestselling Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008; see also Peter R. Ackroyd (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963–1970. A scholarly perspective on the problems related to the presence of prints in Renaissance Bibles, especially in England, is the focus of Michael Gaudio, *The Bible and the Printed Image in Early Modern England: Little Gidding and the Pursuit of Scriptural Harmony*. London: Routledge, 2016. For a collection of studies devoted to the interplay of images and texts in the Northern tradition see Feike Dietz et al (eds.), *Illustrated Religious Texts in the North of Europe, 1500–1800*. London: Routledge, 2014.

5. On Antwerp and Amsterdam as important centers of the printmaking industry, see: Jan van der Stock (ed.), *Antwerp: Story of a Metropolis. 16th–17th-Century*. Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1993; Elizabeth Alice Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998; and Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

6. For a discussion on the risks of using anachronistic categories and concepts in the historical analysis of artworks see the remarks in Hans Belting, *Bild und Kunst. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*. Munich: C.H.Beck, 1990 (Eng. Trans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Images Before the Era of Art*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994). For a

critical analysis concerning the use of trans-historical categories in the study of Renaissance artworks, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*. New York: Zone Books, 2010.

7. On sixteenth-century practices of conservation among print collectors, see the seminal study by Alpheus Hyatt, *Prints & People: A Social History of Printed Pictures*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971. For insightful remarks about early modern practices of collecting works on paper, especially drawings, see Genevieve Warwick, *The Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

8. See James Clifton and Walter S. Melion (eds.), *Scripture for the Eyes. Bible Illustration in Netherlandish Prints of the Sixteenth Century*, Exhibition Catalog, Museum of Biblical Art, New York, June 5–September 27, 2009, London: Giles, 2009. For theoretical considerations on the study of art in relation to its geographical coordinates, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

9. For a seminal research on this fascinating topic see S. P. Verma, *Biblical Themes in Mughal Painting*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2011.

10. A pioneering study on this topic is Arnold Hauser, *Der Manierismus. Die Krise der Renaissance und der Ursprung der modernen Kunst*. Munich: Beck, 1964 (Eng. Trans. *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965.) On the European dissemination of Italian models in the sixteenth century, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The School of Prague. Painting at the Court of Rudolf II*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988.

see Nicole Dacos, *Viaggio a Roma. I pittori europei nel Cinquecento*. Milan: Jaca Book, 2012.

11. James Clifton, *Preface*, in *Scriptures for the Eyes*, op. cit., p. 13.

12. These dates are based on the entries respectively published in the chronology provided in New Hollstein 1145.II (*Repentance of Peter*, 1643), New Hollstein 85.III (*Widow's Mite*, 1639), New Hollstein 312.III (*Crucifixion*, 1643), New Hollstein 313.II (*Conversion of St Paul*, 1643).

13. For further information concerning the 1662 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, see Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; Alan Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography*. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013. For a sociological approach, see also Judith D. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

14. On the English Civil War, see Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: Papists, Gentlewomen, Soldiers, and Witchfinders in the Birth of Modern Britain*. Basic Books, 2008

15. The activities of Rev. Slaughter Clarke are mentioned in *The History and Antiquities of the Town and Country of the Town*

of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Including an Account of the Coal-Trade of that Place and Embellished with Engraved Views of the Publick Buildings. London: John Brand, 1789. Both Rev. Slaughter and his son, Rev. Robert Clarke, are cited by A.B. Wright, *Towards a History of Hexham in Three Parts: Illustrating Its Ancient and Its Present State, Civil and Ecclesiastical Economy, Antiquities and Statistics, with Descriptive Sketches of the Scenery and Natural History of the Neighbourhood*. Alnwick: W. Davison, 1823.

16. Robert Fitzgibbon Young, *A Bohemian Philosopher at Oxford in the 17th Century. George Ritschel of Deutschkahn (1616–1683)*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1925.

17. On the pedagogical approach inaugurated by Comenius, see Matthew Spinka, *John Amos Comenius: That Incomparable Moravian*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1943.

18. For the history of the Hexham Abbey and its priors, see James Raine, *The Priory of Hexham*. Durham England Pub. for the Society by Andrews and Co., 1864–65; *Hexham Abbey*. London: Scala Publishers, 2008.

19. Fitzgibbon 1925, p. 15

20. George Ritschel, *De Ceremoniis Ecclesiae, Cum primis Anglicanae, Dissertatio: Ubi Usus earum licitus ostenditur, et superstitionis ac Idololatriae crimine vindicatur [...] Studgardiae, Johan Godofred Zubrodt, Anno MDCLXIII*.

21. Fitzgibbon 1925, p. 19.

22. *Ibidem*, p. 20. Concerning Rev. Ritschel's familiarity with the Netherlandish culture, Fitzgibbon reports that “[w]hen the Civil War broke out in 1642, Ritschel, like many other Oxford students, migrated to the Netherlands, where, according to Wood, he resided at the Hague, Leyden and Amsterdam,” *Ibidem*, p. 6.

23. On the connection between Ritschel and Comenius, see Fitzgibbon 1925, especially pp. 8–11. To understand the intellectual influence of Comenius in England, see also Robert Fitzgibbon Young, *Comenius in England*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.

24. Johann Amos Comenius, *Opera Didactica Omnia [...] Amsterdam: Impensis D. Laurentii de Geer, 1657 (Cons. Ed. Didactica Magna. Tratado da arte universal de ensinar tudo a todos. Introdução, tradução e notas de Joaquim Ferreira Gomes, Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian 1985, p. 455; all translations from this text were by the author).*

25. Comenius 1657 (1985), p. 457.

26. *Ibidem*.

27. *Ibidem*, p. 240

28. *Ibidem*.

29. *Ibidem*, p. 291

30. *Ibidem*.

31. *Ibidem*.

32. *Ibidem*, p. 308.

33. *Ibidem*.

34. *Ibidem*.

35. The expression “ocular demonstration” appears in the English translation by Maurice Walter Keatinge of John Amos Comenius' *The Great Didactic*, London: A. and C. Black, 1907, p. 149.

36. Comenius 1657 (1985), p. 309.

37. *Ibidem*, p. 311.
38. *Ibidem*, p. 309.
39. *Ibidem*, p. 313.
40. *Ibidem*, p. 310.
41. The concept of “mental vision technique” appears frequently in Comenius’ *Great Didactic*. See, for instance, in the 1907 English edition of this text (quoted in note 36), the author’s comments on p. IV and p. 202.
42. This is, in fact, the title translated into English in an edition published in London in 1705: Joh. Amos Comenii, *Orbis Sensalium Pictus: Hoc est: Omnium fundamentalium in mondo rerum, & in vita actionum, Pictura & Nomenclatura*. London: John Sprint at the Bell in Little Britain, 1705. Interestingly, in the preface to this volume, the publisher lists, among the main goals of this “little Book” to “stir u the Attention, which is to be fastened upon things, and ever to be sharpned [*sic*] more and more.” (Comenius 1705, p. A4).
43. On the 1887 edition translation, see John Amos Comenius, *The Orbis Pictus*. Syracuse: C.W.Bardeen, 1887.
44. Comenius 1887, p. XIV.
45. *Ibidem*.
46. *Ibidem*.
47. *Ibidem*, p. XXX.
48. *Ibidem*, p. XV.
49. On the different positions of Comenius and Ritschel in metaphysical matters, see Fitzgibbon 1925, in particular pp. 10–11.
50. On the biblical exegesis in relation to the art historical ambit, see Walter S. Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemans (eds.), *Imago Exegetica. Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400-1700*. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2014.
51. See note 20.
52. Ritschel 1698, p. 37.
53. *Ibidem*, p. 38.
54. *Ibidem*, p. 39.
55. *Ibidem*, p. 117.
56. *Ibidem*, p. 31.
57. *Ibidem*, p. 115.
58. I am paraphrasing a memorable remark made by Tzvetan Todorov during a meeting that took place in Paris in 2011. Referring to the power of paintings to “set before one’s eyes” images that appear almost as tangible as reality itself, while maintaining their capacity to also evoke other levels of discourses and sign-related implications, Todorov claimed that “*la peinture pense*.”
59. On the interaction of critical categories and art descriptions in the Italian Renaissance, see the magisterial book by Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators. Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971; see also by the same author, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
60. On this fascinating topic see the pioneering remarks of Rensselaer Wright Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*. New York: W.W.Norton, 1967.
61. On the centrality of these categories during the Renaissance, see Baxandall 1972 and, more recently, Thomas Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400-1800*. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2000 as well as Hellmut Wohl, *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style*. Cambridge–New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
62. For the migration of aesthetic categories and the growing consciousness of particular “visual cultures,” see the influential research by Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Seventeenth Century*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983, and, in line with this methodological perspective, Walter S. Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander’s Schilder-Boeck*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991. For a different approach, focused on the exchanges between Van Mander and the Italian literary and rhetorical tradition, see Ricardo De Mambro Santos, *La civil conversazione pittorica. Riflessione estetica e produzione artistica nel trattato di Karel van Mander*. Sant’Oreste, Rome: Apeiron, 1998.
63. On the value of painting, sculpture, and architecture as “Liberal arts,” see Edouard Pommier, *Comment l’art devient l’Art dans l’Italie de la Renaissance*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.
64. Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck, waerin voor eerst de leerlustighe Ieught den grondt der edel vry schildercost in verscheden deelen wort voorghedraegen*. Haalem: Passchier van Westbusch, 1604. For a partial English translation of this book, see Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-Boeck (1603-1604)*, ed. Hessel Miedema. Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994–99. On the historical construction and the theoretical categories of Karel van Mander, see Melion 1991 and Ricardo De Mambro Santos, *Il canone metamorfico. Saggio sulla pittura del Manierismo fiammingo e olandese*. Sant’Oreste, Rome: Apeiron, 2002.
65. For the expression “learned hands,” see Ricardo De Mambro Santos, *U Cleyn Weerelt: The Ethics of Creativity in Northern Renaissance and Mannerism* in Norbert Michels (ed.), *Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617). Mythos, Macht und Menschlichkeit*, Exhibition Catalog. Peterberg: Michel Imhof Verlag, 2017, pp. 14–41.
66. Van Mander distinguishes quite programmatically in his pages the “well educated” members of a “learned” audience, using expressions such as *Const-beminders*, *Const-liefhebbers*, *Const-liefdighen*, and *Const-verstandighen*, in sharp opposition to the group of unprepared, culturally naive, and theoretically unaware of the complexities of the art making process, indicated as “ordinary people” (*Ghemeen volcke*). For an example of this social, cultural, and intellectual divide see note 67 and for further considerations see note 76.
67. Especially in the pages of the so-called “Didactic Poem,” Van Mander establishes a set of important categories, parameters, and concepts. For a critical edition of this volume, see Karel van Mander, *Den grondt der edel vry Schilder-const*, Translation and comments by Hessel Miedema. Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1973. More recently, a French translation was published by Jan Willem Noldus as *Principe et fondement de l’art noble et libre de la peinture*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009.

68. Van Mander 1604, fol. 208v.

69. On the complex issue of “authorship” and “authorial-ity” in Postmodern theory, see Michel Foucault’s groundbreaking lecture delivered at the Collège de France in 1969 and later published as an essay under the title *Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur*, or in English, *What is an Author*, reprinted in Donald F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.

70. On Justus Lipsius, see Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostolics. Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991; on Coornhert, see Gerrit Voogt, *Constraint on Trial. Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Religious Freedom*. Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2000.

71. For this hilarious episode, see Van Mander 1604, fols. 279v–280r. On the fascinating career of Cornelis Ketel, see Nicolas Galley, “Cornelis Ketel: A Painter without a Brush,” in *Artibus et Historiae*, 2004, Vol. 25, pp. 87–100.

72. For the phenomena of iconoclasm in sixteenth-century Northern Europe, see David Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1566–1609*. New York: Garland, 1988; by the same author, see also *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989.

73. Van Mander 1604, fol. 206r.

74. *Ibidem*, fol. 224v.

75. *Ibidem*, fol. 210v.

76. *Ibidem*, fol. 204r.

77. On this topic, see De Mambro Santos 2017 (forthcoming).

78. Van Mander characterizes the *Schilder-const*, or the “art of painting” as a “noble and liberal” activity from the very title-page of the so-called “Didactic Poem,” whose title is, indeed, *Den grondt der edel vry Schilder-Const*, that is to say, “The Foundations of the Noble and Liberal Art of Painting.”

79. Van Mander 1604, fol. 285v. For further remarks on Goltzius’ ekphrastic eloquence see De Mambro Santos 2017 (forthcoming).

80. I would like to thank Professor Ortwin Knorr, from Willamette University, for providing such a beautiful and accurate translation of these verses by Franco Estius.

81. About Antwerp and Amsterdam, see note 4.

82. Clifton 2009, p. 11.

83. *Ibidem*.

84. On Neostoicism, see Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

85. See note 69.

86. On Lipsius’ friendship with Rubens’ brother, see Morford 1991, pp. 3–13.

87. On the relationship between Coornhert and Heemskerck, see Ilija Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and the Dutch Humanism in the Sixteenth Century*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1977. On the dissemination of Neostoic principles in Netherlandish prints throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth century,

see also, by the same author, *Images for the Eye and Soul: Functions and Meaning in Netherlandish Prints (1450–1650)*. Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006. On the connections between young Goltzius and Coornhert, see Huigen Leeftang, Ger Luijten, and Lawrence W. Nichols (eds.), *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): Drawings, Prints, and Paintings*, Exhibition Catalog. Zwolle: Waanders; Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003.

88. Morford 1991, p. 15.

89. *Ibidem*, pp. 15–16.

90. *Ibidem*, p. 16.

91. *Ibidem*, p. 19.

92. *Ibidem*, p. 20.

93. *Ibidem*.

94. *Ibidem*, p. 24.

95. *Ibidem*, p. 23.

96. For the dichotomy of *nae het leven* and *uyt den gheest* in Van Mander’s art theory, see Melion 1991 and De Mambro Santos 1998. For the semantic as well as cognitive implications conveyed by the term *nae het leven*, see also Claudia Swan, “Advivum, naer het leven, from the life: defining a mode of representation,” *Word & Image*, 1995, pp. 353–372.

97. On the dynamics within the Renaissance workshop, see the studies by Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Project and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, and Bruce Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work: From Pisano to Titian*. New York: Icon Editions, 1990; also Michael Cole and Mary Pardo (eds.), *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

98. For further considerations on the importance of undertaking formative travels, see David Young Kim, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance: Geography, Mobility, and Style*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

99. Morford 1991, p. 72.

100. “*Imitationem dico, sermonis nostri ad sermonem veterem, aptam conformationem, et stilo expressam*,” *Ibidem*, p. 73.

101. *Ibidem*.

102. *Ibidem*, p. 72.

103. A very good example of this iconography is Federico Zuccari’s decorations of this house in Rome on Via Gregoriana. Karel van Mander too uses this metaphor in the *Schilder-Boeck* in order to emphasize the difficult, yet rewarding path that the committed young painter shall find ahead, before becoming a “learned” master. See, in this regard, Van Mander’s considerations about the young apprentices at the very opening sentences of the “Didactic Poem.” Out of thousands of aspiring painters, only a few shall fully embody this “noble and liberal” profession: it is easier to call oneself a painter than actually becoming one for, between an artist and another artist, stands an enormous mountain (“*Tē zjyn een Schilder, t’woort is licht te spreken, maer Schilder, en Schilder, siet, tusschen desen Tusschen Schilder en Schilder licht eenen grooten bergh*,” Van Mander 1604, fol. 1r).

104. *Ibidem*, fo. 218r. On Van Mander’s (not unconditional) admiration for Rome, see Ricardo De Mambro Santos, *Roma*

Fiamminga. I maestri nordici alla scoperta dell'Italia e dell'antico. Roma: Edilazio, 2002. On the presence of Northern painters in Rome, see also Nicole Dacos, *Roma quanta fuit. Tre pittori fiamminghi nella Domus Aurea*. Roma: Donzelli, 2001.

105. Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. Adriana Marucchi. Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1956–57, Vol. I, p. 97.

106. Although critically outdated, the term “Romanists” has been consistently used in past publications to describe the very complex interaction among Northern masters and (ancient as well as Renaissance) Roman models. On this topic, see the seminal studies by G.J. Hoogewerff, *Nederlandsche schilders in Italie in de 16de eeuw. De gheschiedenis van het Romanism*. Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1912; Max Dvořák, “Über die geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen des niederländischen Romanismus,” in *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte: Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, Munich: R. Piper, 1928, pp. 203–215; see Nicole Dacos, “Les peintres romanistes: histoire du terme, perspectives de recherche et l'exemple de Lambert van Noort,” in *Bulletin Institute Historique Belge à Rome*, 1980, pp. 161–180. For more recent remarks, see also the catalogue of the exhibition *Fiamminghi a Roma, 1508-1608. Artistes des Pays-Bas et de la principauté de Liège à Rome de la Renaissance*. Brussels: Société des expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1995.

107. For a seminal study on the stylistic components of the so-called *figura serpentinata*, see John Shearman, *Mannerism*. London: Penguin Books 1967; Emil Maurer, *Manierismus: Figura Serpentinata und andere Figurenideale*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001.

108. On the fortune of Raphael's cartoons in the Netherlands, see Nicole Dacos, *Le Logge di Raffaello. Maestro e bottega di fronte all'antico*. Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1977 (repr. Milan: Jaca Book, 2008); see also the remarks concerning the fortune of Raphael's style in Europe in Robert Williams, *Raphael and the Redefinition of Art in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge–New York: University of Cambridge Press, 2017.

109. On this topic, see the classic study by André Chastel, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*. Princeton University Press, 1983. On Heemskerck, see note 87.

110. On Polidoro da Caravaggio, see Philip Pouncey and John A. Gere, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*. London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1962; Alessandro Marabottini, *Polidoro da Caravaggio*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1969. In particular, on Polidoro's facade decorations, see Anna Borzomati, *Polidoro da Caravaggio. Il restauro delle decorazioni del Casino del Bufalo, Roma*. Roma: Gangemi, 2007.

111. On Baldassare Peruzzi, see the fundamental study by Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner*. Wien: A. Schroll, 1968; Mark Wilson Jones, “Palazzo Massimo and Baldassare Peruzzi's Approach to Architecture Design,” in *Architectural History*, 1988, Vol. 31, pp. 59–106.

112. Ilja M. Veldman, *Romanism*, Grover Dictionary Online.

113. The Northern self-consciousness of being part of a community of thinkers, artists, and humanists, related to, but

also autonomous from the canons established by the Italian Renaissance is a very important phenomenon of cultural identity in sixteenth-century Europe. See De Mambro Santos 2002 and De Mambro Santos 2017 as well as Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996, and also Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. On the religious differences between Southern and Northern areas of Europe, see H.A. Enno van Gelder, *The Two Reformations in the 16th Century. A Study of the Religious Aspects and Consequences of Renaissance and Humanism*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.

114. On the presence of Northern artists or Netherlandish works in Venice, see Bernard Aikema, Beverly Luise Brown, and Giovanna Nepi Sciré (eds.), *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*. New York: Rizzoli, 2000; see also the recent exhibition catalog edited by Matthijs IJink, A.M. Koldeweij, and Charles Cornelis Maria Mooij *Hieronymus Bosch. Visions of Genius*. Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2016.

115. “Te Roome leertmen teeckenen, ende te Venetien schilderen,” Van Mander 1604, fol. 7v.

116. For an analysis of the art theory in Cinquecento Venice, see Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*. New York: New York University Press, 1968.

117. Comenius 1657 (1985), p. 91.

118. *Ibidem*.

119. On Van Mander's concept of *Verscheydenheyt* see Melio 1991 and De Mambro Santos 1997 and, more recently, De Mambro Santos 2017.

120. Van Mander 1604, fol. 285r.

121. *Ibidem*, fol. 284r.

122. *Ibidem*, fol. 285v.

123. It is important to clarify that, in Van Mander's mind, Rome and Florence were part of the same “body”-oriented tradition and, consequently, were almost considered as synonymous in facts of art. On this important point, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, “Reading Van Mander on the Reception of Rome: a Crux in the Biography of Spranger in the *Schilder-Boeck*,” in *Bolletino d'Arte. Supplemento*, 1997, 100, pp. 295–304.

124. On the paradigm of “more real than reality,” see Paolo Torresan, *Il dipingere di Fiandra. La pittura nederlandese nella letteratura artistica italiana del Quattro e Cinquecento*, Modena: S.T.E.M.-Mucchi, 1981.

125. Van Mander 1604, fol. 253r.

126. On Vasari's paradigm of *notomie* in Michelangelo in opposition to Van Mander's concept of *Verscheydenheyt*, see Riccardo De Mambro Santos, “Ladri di Maniera. Van Mander, Vasari e il Mito di Michelangelo,” in *Il Mito di Michelangelo*, edited by Alessandra Barone. Arezzo: Fraternalità dei Laici, 2015; and also, by the same author, “The Ultimate Beginning. Vasari, Van Mander and the Paradigm of Nuova Imitazione,” in *Vasari als Paradigm*, edited by Fabian Jonietz and Alessandro Nova. Vicenza: Marsilio Editore, 2016.

127. Van Mander 1604, fols. 34r–38r.
128. Christopher Fitter, *Landscape from the Ancients to the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford Art Online.
129. On the “World Landscape,” see Walter S. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth. The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
130. “Want den Italiaen heeft d’hersens in zijn hoofd / Maer niet vergeefs men seght, hoe dat de Nederlander, / Heeft in zijn handt vernuft, soo wouw desen Brabander / Landschappen maken eer,” Van Mander 1604, fol. 215r.
131. I am referring, of course, to the essay by Erwin Panofsky, *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form*, Vortrage der Bibliothek Warburg, 1927 (Engl. Trans. *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, by Christopher S. Wood. New York: Zone Books, 1991).
132. This hermeneutic model could be compared to the theory of “blanks” proposed by Iser in his description of the phenomenology of the “act of reading,” see Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*. Munich: W.Fink, 1976 (Eng. Trans. *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)
133. In other words, the representations open multiple directions of meaning, instead of illustrating only one specific signification. For those “directions” to be activated, or acknowledge, it is essential the interpretive participation of the reader. For stimulating reflections on this topic, see Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*. Paris: Editions La Fabrique, 2008 (Engl. Trans. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London–New York: Verso, 2011)
134. Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio (The Banquet)*, English Translation by Richard H. Lansing. New York: Garland, 1990. For insightful remarks on this interpretive tradition, see Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.
135. On the tradition of Bible Moralisedes, see John Lowden, *The Making of Bible Moralisedes*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.
136. On the controversial climate regarding the religious confessions in late sixteenth-century Netherlands, see *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic*, edited by August den Hollander et al. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
137. On the Emblematic Tradition, see *Emblematics in the Early Modern Age. Case Studies on the Interaction between Philosophy, Art, and Literature*, edited by Eugenio Canone and Leen Spruit. Pisa: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2012.
138. The hermeneutic paradigm of the “disguised symbolism” was introduced by Erwin Panofsky in his monumental *Early Netherlandish Paintings. Its Origins and Character*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.
139. See Edward H. Wouk and Ger Luijten, *Frans Floris. Catalogues Raisonnés*. Ouderkerk aan den IJssel: Sound & Vision Publishers, 2011.
140. Comenius 1985, p. 66.

Catalog

The Bible displayed in this exhibition – containing *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The New Testament*, and *The Whole Book of Psalmes Collected into English Meeter* – constitutes the main focus of the exhibition *Holy Beauty*, which, given the uniqueness of this volume, could be rightfully called a seventeenth-century monument of Faith, Instruction, and Taste.

Aside from the original Hexham Abbey Bible, however, the exhibition displays also 35 Northern Renaissance prints designed, carved and published by the same group of artists whose images were used in the compilation of this unique volume. These prints were arranged with the spaces of the museum in 6 different sections. Finally, it is important to remind that all works presented in the *Holy Beauty* exhibition belong to Dr. Bruce T. Martin, founder of Historic Bibles & Engravings (www.historicbibles.com)

Brief Overview of the Exhibition

Printed in 1629 by Thomas and John Buck in Cambridge, England, *The Book of Common Prayer* contains, interpolated with the pages of the Sacred Scriptures, an extraordinary set of over 110 full-page engravings, carved in the technique known as burin. Designed by renowned Flemish and Dutch masters, some of these prints display at least one of the three signatures usually adopted to seal this highly collaborative medium, mentioning the name of the designer (*invenit*, “invented”), the engraver (*fecit*, “executed”), or the publisher (*excudebat*, “issued”). For the most part, these images were made between 1567 and 1585.

A century later, these engravings were purchased and inserted into the biblical text, in order to illustrate some of the most relevant episodes of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, thus providing useful visual prompts for devotional or educational practices. Some of the images inserted into the book – namely, the *Repentance of Peter* (Mt 26), the *Widow’s Mite* (Mk 12), the *Crucifixion* (Lk 23), and the *Conversion of Saul* (Ac 9), to quote just a few – were printed later than the other engravings and can be dated around 1643 (New Hollstein). This year constitutes, therefore, the *terminus post quem*, or “after which,” the volume and the images may have been bound together.

On the other hand, the Bible shows little internal wear and tear, which clearly indicates that it was used as a worship book for only a short amount of time, if ever, given that a new official edition of the Book of Common Prayer would replace this – soon outdated – version in 1662, published under the protection of King Charles II. It seems implausible, therefore, to believe that the compiler of this volume – be it a cleric or a laymen – would have put so much effort into inserting these strategically chosen images within a book that had already become obsolete. Consequently, the date 1662 represents the *terminus ante quem*, or “before which,” the compilation must have been made.

In order to identify the original compiler of this volume, an important clue is provided by the family crest and bookplate present in the book. Thanks to these internal evidences, in fact, one may assert that the Family Clarke – active between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century – was responsible for

binding, though not compiling, the Bible in its current shape. In all probability, the book was rebound by Rev. Slaughter Clarke (1741–1820), father of Rev. Robert Clarke (1771–1824) whose bookplate is glued to the inside cover of the volume. The last identifiable owner is Livingston Clarke (c. 1845–c. 1910). In all these years, the family has resided in Hexham, a civil parish in Northumberland, England.

This last point is particularly important for it locates the book – on a micro-historical level of analysis – within a specific context. Thanks to this information, in fact, it sounds more than plausible to suggest the name of Rev. George Ritschel, Sr. (1616–1683) as the original compiler of this most unique *Book of Common Prayer and New Testament*. Born “in the borders of Bohemia,” as scholar Robert Fitzgibbon affirms, Rev. Ritschel spent most of his formative years working as an assistant of Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), a well-known humanist, author of the influential treatise *Didactica Magna*, or “The Great Didactic” (London, 1657), in which he fervently stressed the importance of images in the educational process.

In those years, Rev. Ritschel traveled constantly to Holland, Denmark, and Germany, before moving to England, where he was appointed, in 1655, perpetual curate and Mercers’ lecturer at the Hexham Abbey: a role that he would fulfill until his death in 1683. In 1661, he published a book eloquently titled “In Defense of the Ceremonies of the Church in England” (*Dissertatio de caerimoniis Ecclesiae Anglicanae*), in which he strenuously defended the Anglican Church against the risks of “superstition and idolatry.” It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the Bible displayed in this exhibition – with the addition of an exceptional *corpus* of Netherlandish Renaissance prints – was presumably compiled by Rev. George Ritschel in connection with his tasks at Hexham Abbey. Furthermore, the choice of illustrating parts of this worship book with Dutch and Flemish prints directly reflected his well-documented familiarity with the Netherlands as well as his belief in the discursive, instructive, and mnemonic power of images in a religious context, partly based on Comenius’ remarks on the same theme.

The Book of Common Prayer presented in this exhibition is characterized by a most peculiar feature: interpolated with the pages of the Scriptures, this volume contains over 110 full-page engravings, from various sources, strategically arranged in the attempt to establish a dialogue with the biblical text. In other words, this is not an illustrated book, but a book *with* illustrations. Carved in a technique known as burin by a group of renowned sixteenth-century Dutch and Flemish masters, the prints displayed in this volume were produced mainly between 1567 and 1585, that is to say, many decades before the publication of the book. Only later, between 1643 and 1662, were they inserted into the volume and eventually bound together, creating what could be called an extraordinary “Museum of Sacred Prints.”

Shortly after the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg, around the 1450s, book publishers generally commissioned woodcuts to be included in Bibles. Before the second half of the sixteenth century, the use of engravings as book illustrations was still very rare. The situation changed somewhat at mid-century, partly due to the establishment, in cities such as Antwerp and Amsterdam, of many printing-publishing houses, specializing in the production of independent series of engravings.

The volume displayed in this exhibition constitutes, therefore, a truly exceptional object, for it contains many different print series – originally carved and sold as autonomous *corpus* of images, designed in order to provide visual translations of particular biblical narratives – incorporated, only in a second moment, within the pages of this book.

Thus combined with the text, the engravings collected in this astonishing “Museum of Sacred Prints” – the Hexam Abbey Bible – present outstanding features from a compositional, technical, and conceptual standpoint and count, among the various designers, engravers, and publishers that were involved in their making, names of the caliber of Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574), Hieronymus Cock (1518–1570), Philips Galle (1537–1612), and Jan Sadeler (1550–1600).

In this Bible, artistic qualities, ethic concerns, and religious matters appear profoundly intertwined. That is not to say, however, that the “aesthetic” qual-

ities of these prints – to use an anachronistic term for the time when this Bible was compiled – might have been the main criteria with which they had been bought and, then, inserted into the book. If anything, the opposite appears to be true: the images were probably chosen, in fact, in strict subordination to – and as clear illustrations of – the biblical source, however exquisite the engravings are in themselves. Moreover, during the binding process, some of them had their edges cut and resized in a rather irregular manner so that their compositions result slightly altered and, in some cases, the inscriptions that used to accompany the prints appear partly obliterated, if not removed altogether.

For this reason, it seems reasonable to exclude, from the list of potential compilers and original owners of this book, someone who might have been interested primarily in the artistic components of the engravings. More plausibly, one may suggest that these prints were selected and bought in compliance of more pragmatic factors: first of all, engravings were usually less expensive than paintings, on account of their being serially produced and, consequently, they were affordable even for a middle-class person; second, the particular set of compositions inserted into this volume represent in a clear, persuasive, and very instructive way the biblical narratives they illustrate, displaying well-known iconographies and very expressive formal codes; finally, most of these images could effectively perform the functions of pedagogical as well as mnemonic prompts, thus becoming useful instruments for worship practices and educational purposes.

The interplay between ethics, aesthetics, and religion was a particularly relevant theme in sixteenth-century Europe. Dealing simultaneously with pictures and texts, prints would soon become a most diffused vehicle to disseminate ideas, values, and beliefs. Quoting scholar James Clifton, one may assert that, while “there is no doubt that collectors and connoisseurs valued the aesthetic qualities of prints [...] the subject matter and religious functions of [them] seem to have been of paramount importance, and most buyers, regardless of social or educational class, might well be as content with a crude, pirated copy as with a fine original.”

Section 1 – Catalog entries from 1 to 8

The Ethics of Faith: Neostoicism in Sixteenth-Century Northern Art

Conceived as visual discourses or symbolic constructions, images do not simply illustrate previously printed stories, such as biblical episodes or mythological tales, but create their own narratives. Therefore, images can be as emotionally moving and intellectually stimulating as texts. This concept – widespread amongst humanists, artists, and patrons in the Italian *Quattrocento* – became a crucial theme of debate in sixteenth-century Europe, especially after the theological and cultural clash provoked by the Reformation, on account of which relevant questions concerning the nature and the power of images were once again vehemently addressed by philosophers as well as artists.

This debate will find particularly receptive territories in sixteenth-century Antwerp and Amsterdam, two of the wealthiest and most stimulating centers of art, printmaking, and book production in Europe, including the making of exquisite Bibles. From a confessional perspective, these communities were far from being uniform: Catholics and Protestants, especially Lutherans and Calvinists, lived side by side. In such an environment, it is not surprising that publishers and engravers “were reticent about their own religious inclinations and marketed their works to both Catholics and Protestants,” as scholar James Clifton comments. As a consequence, “religious prints are largely devoid of explicit confessional markers; they draw on scriptural sources and focus on universally palatable moral and devotional themes that might appeal to as broad an audience as possible.”

In this context, artists could find a promising source of inspiration in the philosophical writings associated with the movement known as Neostoicism, given its focus on ethical matters combined with an extensive use of biblical parables and *exempla*. Based on the texts of ancient Stoics – such as Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius – this cultural phenomenon was largely diffused in the Netherlands and Flanders, in virtue of the presence of Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) and Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert (1522–1590).

In their books, Lipsius and Coornhert programmatically reflected upon intellectual tenets that could, on the one hand, be applied in the moral sphere and, on the other, be conciliated with Christian beliefs, elaborating a system that may be rightfully called an “Ethics of Everyday Life.” In their reflections, not only art and philosophy walked hand in hand, but also images and words were considered equally effective vehicles to express values and ideas. Furthermore, both philosophers entertained close relationships with artists of their own time: while Lipsius was a good friend of Peter Paul Rubens’ brother, Philip, Coornhert was highly regarded as an engraver who, after being trained by Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574), would become, in turn, the beloved master of Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617).

In order to illustrate these remarks, the opening section of the exhibition displays a series of prints that testify how biblical subjects, such as the *Stories of Daniel*, were newly interpreted in the light of Neostoic ideas, in order to create images that could satisfy the expectations of different confessional groups.

Section 2 – Catalog entries from 9 to 17 *Rome Sweet Home: Rethinking the Paradigm of “Romanism”*

Moreover, images and words have a long history together. Metaphorically, one could go as far back as the biblical Genesis and the Creation of the First Man to find a pertinent paradigm for this profound relationship: if, at the Beginning of the Times, “the Word was God,” shortly afterward Adam was conceived and then modeled in resemblance of God’s image, just to provide, after a while, *names* to all created *forms*.

During the Italian *Quattrocento*, especially under the philosophical aegis of the Humanism, the symbiosis between these two territories – the textual and the iconic – entailed *de facto* a conceptual equivalence: words and images were soon considered as equally powerful, persuasive, and touching means of representation. Given the Humanistic focus on the study of the Classical tradition as an essential premise for achieving perfection in any field of knowledge

and creativity, Italian Renaissance artists and patrons shared the conviction that words and images were both excellent vehicles to disseminate ideas, express emotions, and convey religious beliefs. Such a profound cohesion was ultimately sealed by a rhetorical formula, borrowed from ancient poet, Horace: *Ut pictura poësis*, that is to say, “as is painting, so is poetry.”

According to this concept, writers and painters are expected to follow similar norms and rules while creating their works. The legacy provided by ancient and Renaissance orators – with their rich set of categories and critical terminology – will in fact become the paramount frame of reference for artists and poets during the production of their compositions. As a consequence, a divide will emerge between theoretically-engaged “artists” and manually-skilled “artisans.”

In addition, audiences too will be soon classified in accordance with their degree of competence in the evaluation of art matters, which will ultimately lead to a sharp social distinction between “learned” (*doctos*) and “ordinary” (*vulgus*) viewers. While the former will know how to appreciate the forms created by poets and painters primarily on account of their specific artistic merits, the latter will admire these same images merely on the basis of their resemblance to the natural world. For the *doctos*, art-created forms could disclose the intellectual dimensions of a discourse, thus becoming authentic “visual poetries.” For the *vulgus*, they were first and foremost mirrors of the visible sphere.

Dealing with both texts and images, prints will become unsurprisingly one of the most popular and searched-for forms of art in sixteenth-century Europe. Moreover, one cannot neglect to stress the fact that the creation of engravings entails a highly collaborative procedure: on the one hand, it requires the joint efforts of “designers,” “engravers,” and “publishers,” whose names will equally converge toward the “authorship” of the work; on the other, it involves also the participation of – sometimes well-known – humanists, poets, and even philosophers, such as Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert (1522–1590), and Karel van Mander (1548–1606). The resulting prints embody, therefore, a complex amalgamation of words and images, even

in the cases in which they only aim to illustrate familiar textual passages. At its best, an engraving can become a truly compelling, stimulating, and autonomous form of visual poetry. A lesson equally shared among Italian and Northern masters throughout the sixteenth century.

One should not be surprised, therefore, if by the beginning of the sixteenth century Rome had already become the “land of the Muses” in the collective imagination of Northern artists and patrons. Praised by Karel van Mander in his *Book of Painting* (Haarlem, 1604), as “the universal school of Painting,” Rome attracted legions of Flemish and Dutch artists who were eager to study *in situ* the monuments of Antiquity as well as the creations of Renaissance masters, especially those of Michelangelo (1474–1564), Raphael (1483–1520), and their followers. Around 1620, the community of foreign artists living in the city was so conspicuous that Giulio Mancini – a well-known art collector, author of the *Considerations on the Art of Painting* – could not refrain from using disdainful words to criticize “these French and Flemish people who come and go as they please without following any rule!”

While living in Rome, many Northern artists – later referred to as “Romanists” – sought to assimilate systematically, but also reinterpret, the set of forms, canons, and iconographies previously established by Italian masters, introducing in their compositions new themes and unprecedented visual metaphors, mostly based on mythological narratives.

Intricate spaces, complex architectural designs, and monumental human bodies depicted in complicated and artificial-looking poses (often following a scheme of representation known as *figura serpentinata*, or “snake-like figure”) are usually indicated as some of the most prominent features in works elaborated by Northern artists who spent their formative years in Rome, like Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574) and Michel Coxcie (1499–1592).

The notion of “Romanism,” however, entails a problematic interpretive assumption, for it implies a rather passive role and a somewhat mechanical adoption of Roman models from the part of Netherlandish artists. For this reason, scholar Ilja Veldman has pointed out that, while the term “Romanism” had

been frequently applied in the past, “it is now less often used [...] mainly because a more profound study of the work of individual artists has led to more attention being given to their specific characteristics, while the diversity of their responses to Italian art has come to be more fully appreciated.”

The prints displayed in this section – *Rome Sweet Home* – aim to illustrate the multiple ways in which Northern artists who had undertaken the period of study in Rome attempted to provide different reinterpretations of the models, styles, and working procedures they had so passionately and attentively examined while living near the banks of the Tiber. This section intends to acknowledge, also, the emergence of a new cultural and social phenomenon in sixteenth-century Netherlands: the rising of a collective identity and the growing consciousness among artists and patrons that they belonged to a distinct – yet, equally valid – artistic tradition, related but no longer subordinated to the canons of the Italian Renaissance.

Section 3 – Catalog entries from 18 to 20

Facing North: Landscape as a Distinctively Netherlandish Genre

In that regard, a distinctively Netherlandish field of representation in the sixteenth century is the depiction of landscapes. As a matter of fact, even the modern English term Landscape derives from the Dutch word *Landschap*, which received its earliest definition within an art historical discourse in 1604, in the *Book of Painting* written by Karel van Mander. Conceived as an autonomous genre, focusing on the depiction of natural elements organized within a vast space or a circumscribed view, detached from any textual references, landscape painting was already perceived, by the end of the sixteenth century, as a distinctively Northern field of visual representation.

Although it is possible to find many landscapes in fifteenth-century Italian paintings, like the famous background of *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci (1454–1519), it is only around 1500, in Germany, that artists such as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538) realized what

could be called the first “pure landscapes”: that is, depictions of natural settings that are “unjustified by emblemata, figures, or narrative, and filled instead with almost expressionistic scenes of Northern forest or woodland pond,” as scholar Christopher Fitter affirms.

Further developed by Flemish artists throughout the sixteenth century, this pictorial genre would gradually become the symbol of the new sense of collective consciousness attained by Netherlandish artists and patrons during the Renaissance. It suffices to mention, for instance, the magnificent “world landscapes” (or *Weltlandschaften*) created by Joachim Patinier (c. 1480–1524) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–1569) in Antwerp. While Italian masters tended to conceive their images primarily as visual translations of textually-based *historiae*, Northern artists aimed at exploring, on the contrary, the countless variety of phenomena, forms, and elements belonging to the natural world, without subordinating them to any previously established narrative. Enthusiastically, Van Mander reported in fact that, among his contemporaries, “Netherlandish artists are usually praised for their landscape paintings, while Italians are celebrated for their representations of figures and divinities.”

It is precisely the absence of such a rigid frame of textual reference – or *historia* – that will allow landscape to become an increasingly autonomous field of artistic experimentation, partly freed from the ideological as well as formal constraints that used to define the boundaries of other genres, such as portraiture, history painting, and religious imagery.

One section of the exhibition displays a series of prints that document an important stage in the development of sixteenth-century landscape as a distinctively Northern art form. Although the prints by Gerard de Jode still appear associated with characters and motifs tied to a specific narrative – i.e., the *Stories of Samson* – they reveal, nevertheless, a new manner of organizing the composition, in the attempt to programmatically enhance the multiple temporalities of the viewer’s gaze, inviting him or her to extend the length of such a personal visual experience, while moving across the multilayered spaces of the image.

Section 4 – Catalog entries from 21 to 26

The Venetian Legacy: Exploring the Concept of Varietas in Northern Art

On the other hand, by the end of the sixteenth century, it had become a common practice among Northern artists to undertake a trip to Italy as the concluding stage of their apprenticeship period. Although Rome used to be the most popular and desired destination, given its unparalleled collections of ancient and Renaissance works, Venice assumed very soon a prominent position as well, attracting an increasingly large number of Flemish, Dutch, and German artists, who were eager to collaborate with one of the local workshops.

For this generation of artists, the works created by masters of the caliber of Titian (c. 1490–1576), Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594), and Jacopo Bassano (c. 1510–1592) had already become models of incomparable perfection, in dialogue – and, sometimes, also in striking contrast – with the images elaborated by Rome-based masters. Venice thus became a most promising alternative to Rome, as Karel van Mander did not neglect to stress in his *Book of Painting* (Haarlem, 1604), asserting that “in Rome one can learn how to draw, in Venice one can learn how to paint.”

Many other historical sources pointed out that, while the training process usually adopted in sixteenth-century Rome tended to focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the study of the human figure, depicted in accordance with the mathematical rules of proportion and the canons of anatomical *decorum*, based on the examples of Antiquity, artists educated in Venice were generally exposed to a wider spectrum of styles, subjects, and techniques, which included the exploration of strikingly new methods of modeling and shading.

Instead of concentrating their attention on the depiction of the human body, inserted within the calculated space of a well-composed *historia*, Venetian masters aimed to render, with analogous diligence and meticulousness, every element belonging to the natural world, giving tangible shapes to the representation of clouds, buildings, animals, and plants. On the other hand, in Rome the study of anatomy constituted the “most excellent field of art.” In Venice,

experienced painters as well as young apprentices would investigate the multiple aspects of reality, codifying accordingly a more naturalistic style, which attracted the interest of many Northern artists, such as Maerten de Vos (1532-1603).

As a direct consequence of this cultural divide, the canons of “beauty” promoted in Venice appeared more flexible and variegated than the Classicist principles diffused in Rome, where the works by Michelangelo (1474-1564) and Raphael (1483-1520) had set the parameters of highly idealistic forms. For Venice-based masters, on the contrary, the concept of *varietas* – i.e., “variety” – provided a stimulating alternative to the Classicist tendencies and opened up a most enriching road of experimentation for Northern artists to follow and further expand.

Therefore, one particular section of the exhibition illustrates the various fields in which the *Venetian Legacy* had a strong impact on the creative agenda of Netherlandish masters: from a fresher way of depicting landscapes to a new manner of rendering intense, dramatic effects of light.

Section 5 – Catalog entries from 27 to 30

Moralized Prints: Allegories in Sixteenth-Century Religious Prints

Another important aspect of sixteenth-century Northern prints is the conspicuous use of visual metaphors and “moralizing” narratives. It suffices to think about the role played by symbols and allegories in the biblical stories: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This famous sentence from the Bible significantly places emphasis on the metaphorical value of language as a vehicle thanks to which the reader/believer may reach deeper truths and access metaphysical revelations during the interpretive – or exegetic – process. In such a spiritual context, interpreting means learning; learning, in turn, may help one find his or her path of salvation. However immediate a sentence might appear in the Scriptures, it has always the power of referring to another dimension and unveiling a myriad of symbolic meanings. Words and images are thus polysemic.

Artists who were asked to illustrate stories from the Bible had to face a similarly challenging process of symbolic representation in order to create visual narratives that could give shape to beings, forms, and phenomena that did not belong to the natural world, but could, nevertheless, become “visible” and “meaningful.” The more convincing and compelling one image would appear, the more effectively it could convey the multiple senses encompassed in a biblical episode, facilitating its apprehension (Didactic function), memorization (Mnemonic task) and dissemination of ethical implications (Moral purpose).

Allegories, parables, and metaphors have been recurrent features in this process of “moralization” of the Sacred Scriptures. Thanks to this complex system of analogies and correspondences, one narrative may be read in many different ways and, consequently, be interpreted according to various hermeneutic procedures. In a context such as late sixteenth-century Flanders and Netherlands – characterized by fervid religious debates and sharp confessional divisions – the art market had to respond to the demands, needs, and expectations of patrons belonging to diverse religious communities – like Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, and Mennonites – living within the same geographical area. Images and words, therefore, were not only applied with particular caution and attention, but also designed with the strategic intention of opening variable semantic possibilities.

The reciprocal interaction of words and images characterizes also another very common form of visual discourse in sixteenth-century Europe: the “Emblems.” In the works created within the “Emblematic Tradition,” the same image may become the vessel of a wide spectrum of ideas and values, thanks to its intricate fusion with verbal signs. Accordingly, the hermeneutic process will be often focused on the analysis of the potential meanings conveyed by an image, in search of what art historian, Erwin Panofsky, has called the “disguised symbolism.” For this reason, allegorical images will frequently represent, side by side, familiar objects and natural-looking figures with unusual, or blatantly bizarre, elements, in order to continuously stimulate the viewer to look for unveiled levels of signification within a work.

A particular section of the exhibition displays four prints whose compositions clearly hold symbolic implications, which, in turn, intended to offer a “lesson” about the world associated with biblical parables and ethical teachings, presented in a *moralisée* – or moralizing – perspective.

Section 6 – Catalog entries from 31 to 35

Beyond the Rainbow: The Use of Color in Northern Renaissance Prints

Finally, the exhibition explores also the use of colors in sixteenth-century engravings. Although one may almost mechanically think of a print as an essentially black and white medium, unlike color-filled paintings, recent scholarship has demonstrated that, in many areas of sixteenth-century Europe and, in particular, in the Netherlands, Flanders, and Germany, hand coloring procedures were a rather common practice among engravers. In Germany, for instance, as scholar Larry Silver has clarified, “a quite respectable living was made in the print trade by individuals known as *Briefmaler*, or print colorists, who were included among the depicted professionals in Jost Amman’s *Book of Trades* (Frankfurt, 1568).” One should not be surprised, therefore, if Karel van Mander praises, in his *Book of Painting* (Haarlem, 1604), printmakers and engravers, such as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533), and Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1618) among the most accomplished practitioners of the *Schilderconst*, that is to say, the “Art of Painting.” According to these premises, engraving is, by all means, a form of painting.

Almost invariably regarded as a later, somehow dubious and often unwanted addition to a print, in an attempt to compensate for some of its alleged deficiencies of design or poor state of conservation,

the use of colors should be considered, on the contrary, as a constitutive element in many Netherlandish engravings, especially among the ones produced throughout the seventeenth century. Far from being a mere cosmetic or unnecessary accessory, the application of colors intensifies the expressive as well as the semantic qualities of an image, enhancing also its power of capturing the spectator’s attention, while satisfying demands, needs, and expectations of both sophisticated and popular audiences.

From a material standpoint, many different techniques were used in the application of colors, including stencils and water-based solutions that could result as thick and opaque as a tempera or as transparent and delicate as a watercolor. Generally, in the case of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Netherlandish prints, “portions of the sheet remained unpainted, allowing the white of the paper to show through,” as specialist Susan Dackerman explains in a seminal essay on this topic: “The application of the colors is not always precise and in places exceeds the boundaries of the printed lines, suggesting that the colorist swiftly painted a considerable number of impressions.” Moreover, the number of prints colored in this manner clearly demonstrates, according to Dackerman, “that the appearance of the color itself was valued over the meticulousness of its application.”

Until very recently, the production of hand-colored prints has remained a largely unmapped territory of study in the history of art. The works displayed in this section intend to offer a few representative examples of early seventeenth-century colored images belonging to this vast, and still partly unknown, field of research, showing side by side compositions designed by Gerard de Jode (1509–1591) that circulated in two different versions – with and without the application of a selective array of colors. [RDMS]

The authors of the catalog entries are identified by their initials:

Emma Ahern [EA]
McCall Concannon [MC]
Sarah Crabb [SC]
Ricardo De Mambro Santos [RDMS]
Shalini Grover [SG]
Kel Mandigo-Stoba [KMS]
Melissa Riede [MR]
Emma Sargent [ES]
Matthew Swart [MS]
Maya Zavala [MZ]
Natalie Zhang [NZ]

The Hexham Abbey Bible as well as the engravings examined
in the catalog belong to the Collection of Historic Bibles &
Engravings in Albany (OR) (www.historicbibles.com)

1.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (Daniel Refusing to Worship Bel)

1565

Copper engraving

The eight prints displayed in this section belong to a series created by Maarten van Heemskerck representing *The Story of Daniel*. The first five engravings illustrate the story of Bel, an important and venerated pagan god. Here Heemskerck depicts a palace in classicizing style where Daniel, with his arm outstretched in a gesture that points toward the sky, confronts the Persian king Cyrus, and refuses to worship the statue of Bel. In the foreground, two fool children sprawl in front of the king's throne. Their presence in this series not only provides comedic relief, but also stresses the foolishness of humankind, a Neostoic motif rooted in the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), then widely read in the Netherlands.

This composition was printed by Philips Galle, a Dutch engraver and publisher from Haarlem who was best known for reproducing works by Heemskerck. Heemskerck was, in turn, a celebrated painter of biblical and mythological scenes, a renowned printmaker, and one of the first Dutch artists to create designs specifically to be reproduced by engravers. He was also known as one of the most influential Romanists – a term referring to the many Northern artists who had travelled to Rome and sought to integrate themes and stylistic features of the Italian Renaissance into Dutch art. [NZ]



2.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (Feeding the Pagan God)

1565

Copper engraving

This print presents another episode from *The Story of Daniel*. After the confrontation between Daniel and the Persian king Cyrus, the enraged sovereign makes a wager with Daniel. If the statue of the pagan god, Bel, consumes overnight “the twelve great measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine” (Daniel 14:1-22) Daniel will be executed. On the other hand, should the food remain in the temple, thus proving that Bel is not a living god, the temple’s seventy priests would be sentenced to death instead.

Two scenes appear in this print. On the left, Daniel is shown scattering ashes in front of Bel’s pedestal (to reveal any footprints) as part of his plan to prove King Cyrus wrong. On the right, Daniel watches King Cyrus seal the temple door to prevent potential intruders from entering overnight and tampering with the statue and its sacred meal. Meanwhile, the fool children appear to halt their mischief and attentively observe each man executing his plans. [NZ]



3.

Philip Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (The Nocturnal Banquet)

1565

Copper engraving

This print continues the narrative of *The Story of Daniel*. Once the temple has been sealed and night falls, a large gathering of priests – identified by their pointed caps and long robes – along with their wives and children, appear in the temple, feasting on the offerings by torchlight. While the guests indulge in the abundant bottles of wine and plates of meat, a steady flow of priests accompanied by their families continues to emerge from under the table. Their action reveals the existence of a secret passage that allows them to regularly enter and dine on the offerings meant for Bel. As everyone is preoccupied with eating, drinking, and chatting, the statue of Bel in the background silently looms over them. The unbridled appeasement of the senses, regarded as detrimental to ethically conducted behavior, is a theme frequently addressed by Neostoic philosophers in sixteenth-century Netherlands.

Also pertinent in this particular scene is Heemskerck's Romanist style, as seen in the anatomically correct yet very contrived depictions of the human body. While every figure is expressively rendered, the bodies display a stiffness in pose, along with a strong emphasis on their musculature. Interestingly, Heemskerck chose to exclude the fool children from this particular scene – perhaps because the deceitful actions undertaken by the priests were so evident that there was no need to represent them symbolically. [NZ]



4.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (In Front of the King)

1565

Copper engraving

This print includes several scenes. Toward the right side of the foreground, Daniel reveals to King Cyrus and two astonished soldiers – depicted in an extra-large size – the fraud committed by the priests, pointing to the trail of footprints left in the ashes. The two fool children appear again in this area of the composition and are also pointing at the footprints, thus emphasizing the immoral deceit that has taken place.

In the background, Daniel and the King are depicted near the table, as they uncover a secret passage. Finally, at the left side of the print, the artist illustrates the fate of the priests, showing that Daniel has unquestionably won. As soldiers escort one of the priests away to be executed, silhouettes of the other doomed clerics and their families appear in the dimly-lit left corner, foreshadowing the impending end of their lives. [NZ]



5.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (The Destruction of the Statue of Bel)

1565

Copper engraving

This print presents the concluding narrative in *The Story of Daniel* centered on the adoration of the pagan god Bel. As a result of having uncovered the ruse of the god's priests, Daniel, King Cyrus, and his entourage watch the statue of Bel being destroyed by men wielding pickaxes. The statue's disembodied limbs – shown from a foreshortened perspective – litter the ground, while the soldiers continue to hack into the pedestal.

In the right corner of the foreground, the fool children who have appeared throughout the entire series serve to represent the irony of the scene, indicating very clearly the moral value embedded within this narrative by performing major acts of iconoclasm (the rejection or destruction of religious images as heretical), as the child who holds the fool's staff mischievously urinates into the mouth of the fallen idol, while his companion stomps on Bel's disembodied head. Significantly, the engraving depicts an act of iconoclasm that anticipates the violent revolt that would take place in Northern Europe around 1566. [NZ]



6.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (Habakkuk Bringing Daniel Food in the Lion's Den)

1565

Copper engraving

This engraving combines two moments in the dramatic unfolding of Daniel's story, showing Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 16:1-16), and the prophet Habakkuk bringing him food (Daniel 14:33-36). While Daniel is praying to God, grateful for not having been attacked by the lions that lie peacefully next to him, an angel, coming in from the outside the den, carries Habakkuk (Daniel 16:1-16) – literally grabbing him by the hair – in order to bring provisions to Daniel.

It is worth noting the magnificent light effects elaborated by Heemskerck in this work. By means of a sharp contrast of tonalities, the artist distinguishes the desolate space of the den (rendered with thin parallel hatchings that emphasize its dark, gloomy atmosphere) from the illuminated area, where the figure of Daniel, engraved with a stunning economy of line, stands in prayer. [MZ]



7.

Philips Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (Daniel Liberated from the Lion's Den)

1565

Copper engraving

In this print, Daniel is drawn out of the den (Daniel 13:19-23) as he looks up toward King Cyrus as a sign of gratitude, while the sovereign appears in the company of two recurrent figures within this series, namely the *putti* or fool children symbolically representing human folly. This metaphor was widely disseminated in the Netherlands – especially among Neostoic circles – thanks to the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Heemskerck consistently uses the symbolic device of these *putti* throughout the series in order to stress, not without a touch of sympathy and irony, the morally unjust behavior of those who did not believe in Daniel's God and who foolishly attempted to persecute the young prophet. This symbolism also reveals the ethical interpretation of the biblical subject and in this follows a common tendency among Neostoic audiences to read the Bible as a prescriptive treatise focused on moral matters. [MZ]



8.

Philip Galle (1537-1612)

After Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

The Story of Daniel (Daniel's Accusers Cast into the Lion's Den)

1565

Copper engraving

As the series dedicated to *The Story of Daniel* comes to an end, Maarten van Heemskerck concludes the stunning narrative with the scene in which Daniel's accusers are thrown in the lion's den. The composition puts the viewer right into the scene as men and lions are shown wildly contorting and flailing, giving the image a sense of constant movement and panic.

Displaying his impressive ability to depict the figures' anatomies – a distinctive feature of the so-called Romanist masters – Heemskerck portrays the various bodies moving across the space in different poses, as though he intended to capture the kinetic unfolding of the scene in which “the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lion's den, along with their wives and children” (Daniel 6:24).

The lions, too, are rendered in a very expressive way, especially the one represented in the background, snarling as it rears up to attack a fallen man. Meanwhile, to the left and outside the den, King Cyrus's pose is echoed by the fool children, who appear as a recurrent Erasmian symbol which, in this series, is used to express human folly. [MZ]



9.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

The Adoration of the Shepherds

1579

Copper engraving

This engraving depicts multiple scenes from the biblical narrative of the adoration of the shepherds at Christ's birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-16). In the central scene, the shepherds gather to worship the newborn. Humble in both dress and status, they approach from the right middle ground of the composition toward Jesus. In the far right background, the angel Gabriel is shown as he announces the birth of Christ to the shepherds before their arrival.

The figures are somewhat stiff in their anatomical rendering and wear classicizing clothes. However, they display motion and highly individualized psychological physiognomies. The setting is characterized by the presence of fragmented architectural elements, such as the classical columns at the left and in the foreground. These contribute to the overall feeling of antiquity and peacefulness that permeates this image, best exemplified by the calm and centered pose of the Virgin in contrast to the swirling movement of the shepherds around the holy family. These classical elements, along with the monumentality of the figures themselves, can be closely associated with Renaissance models created in Rome, in particular by masters such as Raphael and his collaborators, Polidoro da Caravaggio (ca. 1499-1543), and Giulio Romano (ca. 1499-1546). [MC]



10.

Hans Collaert (ca. 1525/30-1580)

After Ambrosius Francken I (attributed), (1544-1618)

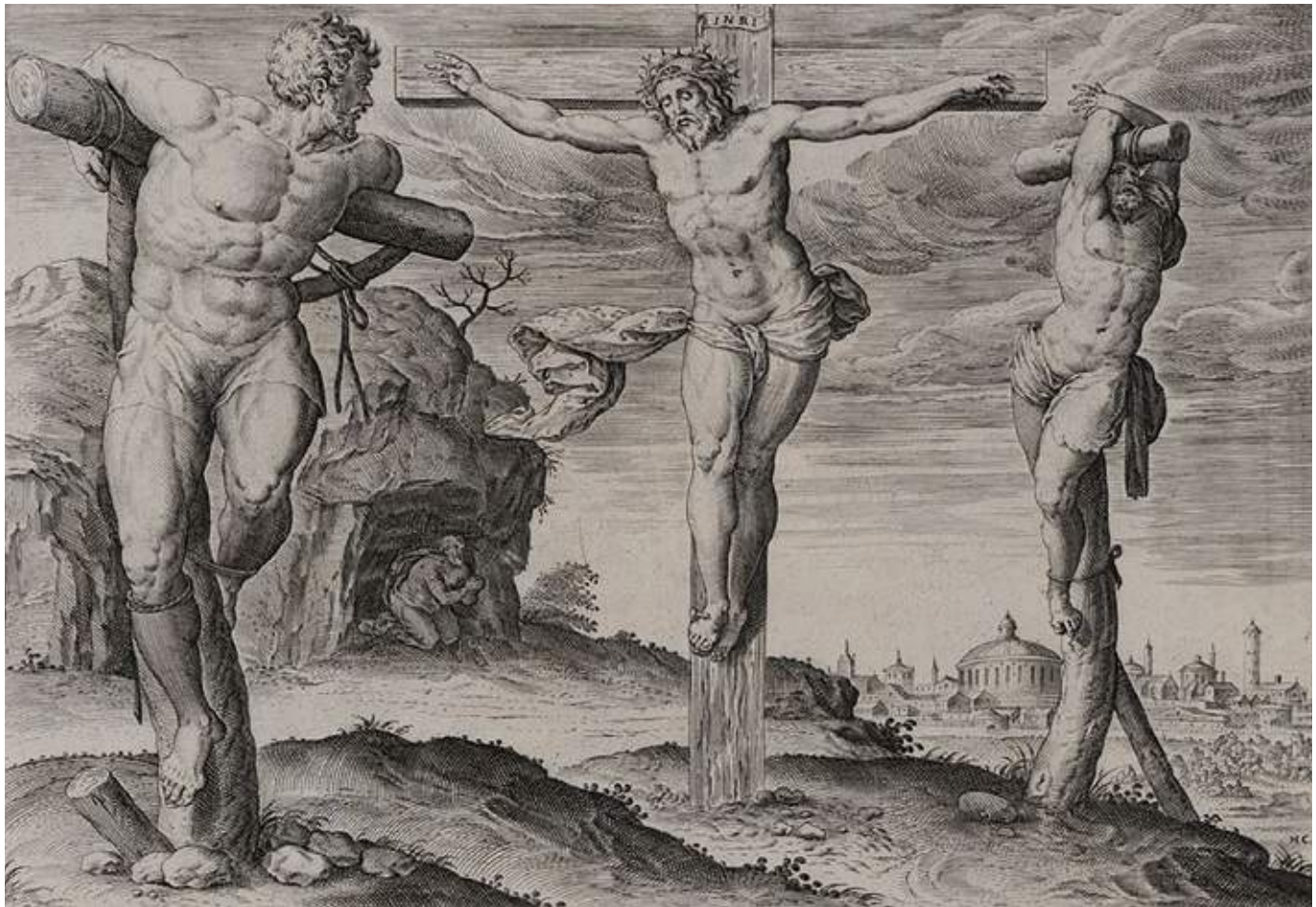
Crucifixion with the Penitent Saint Peter

1563

Copper engraving

After being trained in Brussels as a glass painter, printmaker and tapestry designer, Hans Collaert spent a period of study in Rome, where he devoted particular attention to the copy of works by Michelangelo and Raphael. He has also extensively worked as an engraver after drawings by Lambert Lombard.

The Romanist style is evident in this dramatic scene of the Crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:32-38), where the penitent figure of St. Peter also appears in the background. The rendering of the bodies is reminiscent of the modes of representation created by Michelangelo, especially in the exaggerated musculature and the serpentine postures of the figures, which borrow elements from classical sculpture as well as from the Renaissance paradigm of *figura serpentinata*. The bodies of the two rebels frame the central image of Jesus, who is identified by the crown of thorns. The striking monumentality of the figures, along with their variegated poses and expressive characterization, link this engraving to other so-called Romanist works. [MC]



11.

Lucas van Doetecum (active 1554-1589) and Johannes van Doetecum (active 1554-ca. 1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Zacharias Emerges Mute from the Temple

ca. 1572

Copper engraving

This composition depicts multiple scenes from the biblical story in which Zacharias, father of St John the Baptist, receives word from God that his wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a divine son (Luke 1:9-22). The archangel Gabriel is represented in the far right background, bringing God's message to Zacharias at the altar of the temple. Zacharias is depicted again, walking down the stairs from the altar, unable to speak, standing in front of the waiting crowd in the foreground.

The eclectic architecture is ornamented with classical motifs, which in turn are interpreted with a distinctively Northern feeling, even though certain elements seem directly borrowed from the Italian Sebastiano Serlio's *Book of Architecture*, a very popular reference source for Netherlandish artists after its publication in 1553. The Italian Renaissance influence is evident here in the architectural classicism as well as in the depiction of the figures. They wear clothes that are historically appropriate for the first century CE, and appear in a variety of poses, gestures, and attitudes, drawing on lessons plausibly derived from Roman models such as Raphael, Polidoro da Caravaggio, and Baldassare Peruzzi. [MC]



12.

Lucas van Doetecum (active 1554-1589) and Johannes van Doetecum (active 1554-ca. 1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Jesus in the Temple

ca. 1572

Copper engraving

This engraving depicts the biblical episode in which Jesus consults with teachers and philosophers in the temple, listening to them discuss theology and asking them questions (Luke 2:41-49). The narrative represents the moment when Jesus, as a young boy – here distinguished by a glowing halo – stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents' knowledge in order to spend more time in the house of the Lord. Everyone was impressed with his wisdom and, although he was young at the time, this scene foreshadows Jesus's evangelical mission, depicting his unparalleled ability to attain and disperse knowledge.

The figures sit within a classicist architectural space in which a menorah – already lit – is depicted in the background, carved with lighter lines. The temple appears very Romanist, with its barrel and groin vaults framing the scene and manifesting the influence of the Italian Renaissance style. The figures wear loose clothing, which creates a somewhat amorphous representation of the body. The image thus offers a Northern interpretation of Italian Renaissance models, experimenting and taking creative liberty to transform the aesthetic principles borrowed from that tradition into a distinctively Netherlandish style. [MC]



13.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592)

Cain and Abel

1576

Copper engraving

This print is part of a larger series carved by Jan Sadeler representing the Book of Genesis. The engraving depicts the pivotal moment in which Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, reach their greatest point of conflict (Genesis 4:1-8). The two brothers present offerings to God, who “looked with favor” on Abel over Cain. In anger and resentment, Cain kills Abel. The central scene depicts the violent act, while in the left background Cain is shown receiving God’s punishment for his deed. The inscription at the base of the print reinforces this point of the narrative, stressing that Cain, now marked by his sin, was then sent on a journey by God (Genesis 4:9-16). The image thus combines different moments of the narrative, showing the cruel killing as well as its consequences.

The bodies of the two men are represented in what could be called a Michelangesque manner, their postures twisted and with prominent musculature that is highlighted by their vigorous movements. The additional focus on the landscape shows the importance of nature in Flemish and Northern art, while the presence of God can be inferred from the rays shining down from the sky on the left, punishing Cain for his crime. [EA]



14.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592)

Adam and Eve Crying over the Dead Body of Abel

1576

Copper engraving

In this scene, Adam and Eve appear as the protagonists as they cry over the loss of their son, Abel. This dramatic episode, not narrated in the Bible, concludes the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:8-13). In this composition, Abel's dead body lies stretched out between Adam and Eve, both symbolically and visually connecting the figures of the parents. Adam and Eve are now faced with the first death in the Bible as well as the loss of their second son. The weapon used by Cain to kill Abel is flung between his legs, strategically covering his genitals in an example of calculated *pruderie*.

The figures in this print are represented in a monumental Roman manner, defined by emotion and in their physical prime. These stylistic features are Michelangelesque in nature and clearly reflect the time Coxcie spent in Rome, studying classical and Renaissance models. The dynamic, highly emotional visual narrative created by the artist in fact shows a perfect resolution of Northern elements and Italian Renaissance canons. [EA]



15.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592)

Measurements for the Construction of the Babel Tower

1579

Copper engraving

In this print a multitude of human figures appear as one united and cohesive group that stretches across the foreground and back toward the horizon. This unification was caused by the Great Flood, which brought humanity together. Here, the newly unified body of humanity is planning to build the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1).

The diverse ways in which the figures are represented and interact with one another, ranging from anger to compromise, speak to the increasing differences already growing among the members of this multiethnic society. The movements and poses of the figures demonstrate a close relationship with Italian Renaissance models and, in particular, with Michelangelo's Sybils and Prophets from the Sistine Chapel. On the other hand, a grand landscape dominates the background of the print, thus combining a distinctively Netherlandish attention toward the landscape with a traditionally Italian way of depicting the human body. [EA]



16.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600) and Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Hans Collaert II (1561-1620)

The Construction of the Babel Tower

1579

Copper engraving

This print depicts the Babel Tower, a grand work of architecture and engineering ingenuity, in an advanced state of construction (Genesis 11:1). Scattered groups of humanity stand at the Tower's base, slowly adding layer upon layer to its structure, which gradually rises up toward the sky. In addition, homes and buildings have risen around the growing Tower and extend backward into the rolling hills. The beginning of a possibly diverse, expansive, and multiethnic society is suggested through the collaborative effort to build the Tower.

Despite the holy nature of the narrative, God is not directly represented in this piece. Instead, the scene focuses solely on the human enterprise. From a stylistic standpoint, this image brings together a Romanist composition: characteristics borrowed from Michelangelo's scenes in the Sistine Chapel combined with the Netherlandish attention toward variety, as seen in the depiction of the wide range of elements surrounding the Tower. [EA]



17.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600) and Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Hans Collaert II (1561-1620)

The Babel Tower

1579

Copper engraving

In this print, humanity has almost completed the ambitious project of building the Babel Tower. Unlike the previous prints from this series, however, this composition depicts the dramatic meeting between Humankind and God, who descends from the Heavens in the upper right corner of the engraving.

The division between these two realms – worldly and transcendental – is created visually through the use of a sharp diagonal that breaks the compositional axis. The use of this dynamic arrangement contrasts with the classical depiction of the figures, noticeable in their strong musculature and well-defined features. The styles present here show clear connections with the monumental decoration created by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, and thus establish a new dialogue among different artistic approaches, such as the Roman and the Netherlandish traditions. [EA]



18.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Story of Samson (Sampson and the Lion)

1585

Copper engraving

Gerard de Jode was a sixteenth-century Netherlandish printmaker and cartographer who lived in Antwerp. This engraving is part of a series, three of which are displayed in this exhibition, depicting the biblical story of Samson. This print represents the episode where Samson kills the lion with his bare hands. In this way, “God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit” (Judges 14:10-20).

Even though this narrative constitutes the epicenter of the image, the figures in the foreground appear surprisingly small in comparison to the vast landscape, a feature that emphasizes the importance of landscape as a genre in sixteenth-century Flemish and Dutch art. Samson’s action takes place within the meticulously described natural setting. The dark tree on the left immediately draws the viewer’s attention to the main action, while the combination of ancient and sixteenth-century structures represented in the background further expand the narrative dimension beyond its strictly textual references. [SG]



19.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Story of Samson (Samson Against the Philistines)

1585

Copper engraving

In this engraving, de Jode depicts the biblical episode in which Samson ties the foxes together and attaches burning torches to their tails (Judges 15:4). He then sets them loose in the fields and groves belonging to the Philistines as retaliation for having lost his wife to one of their groomsmen (Judges 15:5-6).

In this vast composition, Samson's act is represented in the foreground on a very small scale, yet it blends in with the landscape smoothly. The curvature of the fire on the animals' tails and the pillar of smoke arising on the left contrast, however, with the linear structures of buildings and meadows depicted in the middle ground. Moreover, the dark tones used in this print not only emphasize the very nature of Samson's revenge, thus casting a sinister shadow over the Philistines, but also help to visually orient the viewer's gaze toward the small figure of Samson, set almost imperceptibly in the foreground. [SG]



20.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Story of Samson (Samson Carries Off the Gates of Gaza)

1585

Copper engraving

In this engraving, de Jode depicts Samson in the foreground of a vast landscape, as he uses his unparalleled strength to carry the ripped-off gates of Gaza to the top of a hill overlooking Hebron (Judges 16:1-3). In spite of the small size in which the human figure is represented, Samson's face and body language express quite convincingly his strength, fearlessness, and determination.

What prevails in this composition, however, is the grand landscape, depicted from a bird's-eye view perspective that recalls the distinctively Northern formula of *Weltlandschaften*, or world landscapes. Moreover, the landscape is naturalistically rendered and contains many smaller yet very detailed scenes in the background that capture the viewer's gaze. [SG]



21.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The First Day of Creation

1587

Copper engraving

Maerten de Vos was trained in Antwerp, but also studied in Rome and Venice, where he was taught by Jacopo Tintoretto. Upon his return to Antwerp, de Vos rose to prominence as a highly respected painter who was active from 1570 until his death in 1603. This image, engraved by Jan Sadeler in 1587, is the first of a series in which the artist depicts the Creation of the Universe according to the biblical narrative (Genesis 1:1-2).

Venetian elements – gathered from the work of such artists as Tintoretto and Jacopo Bassano – are evident in the filling of the open space with a wide variety of details, as well as in the striking lighting effects. The landscape is enriched by many naturalistically rendered and meticulously described elements, such as plants, mountains, and creeks, which allow little rest for the viewer's eye. Every mountain has multiple slopes and crevices, while the vegetation is lush and full of vibrant shapes, thus demonstrating de Vos's intention to provide an image that could capture the astonishing variety of the world created by God. [MS]



22.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Separation of Light and Darkness

1587

Copper engraving

In this composition, God is represented more prominently than he appears in any other print of this series in order to fully express the reach of his power. The image depicts the separation of light and darkness (Genesis 1:3-5), indicated by the powerful lines shooting out from all sides and God's powerful outward gestures, implying that a great force was unleashed.

Lighting is at its most dramatic in this print, allowing the artist to display his dexterity in the rendering of intense and almost theatrical effects of luministic reverberation. In addition, both the clouds and God's robes are drawn in a way that throws numerous and varied shadows that imply the motion of dynamic energies as they unfold. The clouds seem to swirl and rush away from God, enhancing the power and force of his act. Even the sun and the moon in the background appear almost insignificant next to God's monumental presence. [MS]



23.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Creation of the Stars

1587

Copper engraving

In this engraving, God is depicted filling the empty sky with stars, sending them across the universe (Genesis 1:6-8). This action splits the sky in two: the left side is bursting with light, while the right side appears shrouded in darkness. The contrast between the two sides amplifies the power of the scene by throwing both the landscape and God into sharper relief.

This tangible quality is further emphasized by the skillful use of alternate hatching by the engraver. The single hatch-lines stretching from the left side meet with the dark cross-hatching on the right, creating a masterful tonal variation. Moreover, the right portion of the landscape fades into darkness, while the plant life retains its vibrancy, being shaded only with horizontal hatching. Spanning the sky is a half circle resembling a sundial filled with the signs of the zodiac, thus reminding the spectator that in sixteenth-century Europe astrology was a highly regarded discipline, considered often in strict association with religious beliefs. [MS]



24.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

The Creation of Animals

1587

Copper engraving

Ornamentation of a different kind resonates from this scene of God creating all the creatures that could inhabit the earth as well as the sky and the sea (Genesis 1:20-25). This engraving presents an overwhelming number of animals spread across the entire composition. The wondrous appearance of some animals – in particular, the sea-creatures depicted in the left foreground – would probably have brought to the mind of a learned sixteenth-century audience the bizarre figures invented by some of the most renowned Northern Renaissance masters, such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

Details abound in this composition and, where there are no animals or curious creatures to capture the viewer's eye, the scene is filled with a wide variety of other elements spread across the landscape. The *horror vacui*, Latin for the fear of empty space, that characterizes this engraving is a distinctive feature of Late Renaissance works produced in the Netherlands. Both the feelings of awe and the inability to fully grasp the scope of life fill this image with a tangible poetry. God is getting closer to his grand apotheosis here – that is, the creation of man – but he is not there yet. [MS]



25.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

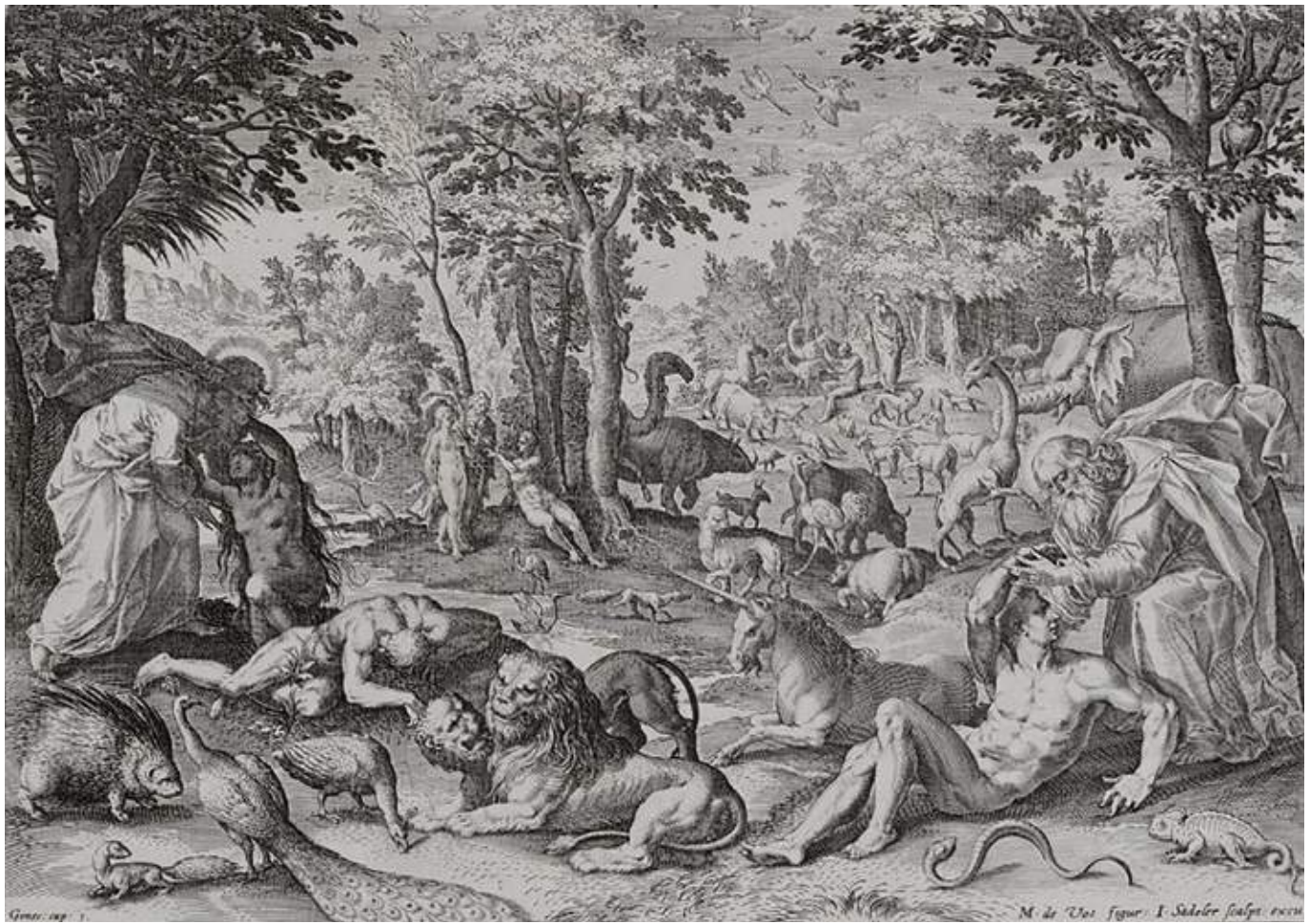
The Creation of Adam and Eve

1587

Copper engraving

In this engraving, God is represented on the right side of the composition as he creates Adam (Genesis 1:26). Some evident influences of Michelangelo's style are noticeable in this print, especially in the rendering of Adam's body, which is clearly reminiscent of the same scene depicted in the Sistine Chapel. On the opposite side of the image, God appears as he creates Eve from Adam's rib (Genesis 1: 27). De Vos shrouds God and Eve under a tree during this act, creating a compositional tension with the first part of the story, represented on the right. Then, in the middle background, God appears in conversation with Adam and Eve.

Interestingly, the narrative is not represented from right to left, but from the foreground receding toward the far background. Moreover, the main scene is depicted at a lower level, a perspective that allows the artist to use the full space of the picture plane as an intricate container for various episodes, rich with details and convincingly depicted elements, which continually capture the viewer's attention. This use of multiple narratives is another important element that connects the Northern masters with their Venetian Renaissance contemporaries – with the two traditions harmonically fused in de Vos's powerful works. [MS]



26.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

Life in the Garden of Eden

1587

Copper engraving

Incorporating many of the elements depicted in the previous five prints, this engraving concludes the story of the Creation with an idyllic scene in which Adam and Eve express their gratitude to God. The interaction between God and the biblical progenitors of humankind sets the foundation for the scene, with the strong vertical lines of the shaded trees directing the attention of the viewer toward two different points: the area in which Adam and Eve stand, to the left; and, on the opposite side, the cloud with God.

This image seems intended to show God's world as pure and new, one exemplified by a lion resting near two unafraid rabbits close to Adam and Eve. The landscape recedes from the foreground to a distant background, creating a tonal and atmospheric balance across the piece where the various animals interact in harmony. Finally, God departs in this scene, leaving his creation to its own path. [MS]



27.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

1585

Copper engraving

This print belongs to a series published by Gerard de Jode in 1585, titled *Thesari Novi Testamenti* (Treasures of the New Testament). The scene depicts the *Allegory of the Wheat and Tares* (Matthew 13:24-30), in which the Wicked One steals into a man's field while he sleeps. The Wicked One then sows the seeds of tares, a plant that looks so similar to wheat that the difference is only apparent when it grows.

In the center of the composition, the scene is dominated by the figure of the Wicked One, with its talons and a wild boar's head, depicted in dynamic movement in the act of sowing the tares. Stylistically, the figures represented in this scene reveal a Michelangesque fullness of form that is expressed through powerful, statuesque bodies, even in the case of those in repose, as though the artist wanted to emulate the Italian Renaissance canon with respect but also ingenuity. [KMS]



28.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

1585

Copper engraving

This print by Gerard de Jode depicts a combination of stories narrated by Christ in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-12). In this narrative, Christ describes how a landlord returns to his rented land after many years and demands his share of the harvest. His servants, acting as his envoys, are not only refused three times, but ultimately his son is killed, which prompts Christ to claim that it is just for the landlord to raise arms and reclaim his land by force.

In this print four main scenes are depicted, each occupying a separate plane in the image. The figures in the foreground visually quote and also provide a dynamic re-creation of a model favored by Michelangelo, the Torso Bevedere. Moreover, the space appears divided in clearly separated, yet visually interconnected zones, in order to echo the temporal unfolding of the allegorical tale. [KMS]



29.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

The Parable of Ten Virgins

ca. 1570

Copper engraving

This allegorical scene depicts The Parable of Ten Virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13). In the left foreground, five women who have brought oil lamps and oil are depicted in the action of refilling their lamps. The scene is balanced by the women on the opposite side of the composition, who brought only lamps but no oil, and who are consequently in despair. In the parable, Christ interprets this narrative as an allegory of the Last Judgment, and asserts that those who are or who are not prepared to enter the Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to these two groups of women.

The background scene, which converges at the tower, shows the women who had brought both lamps and oil entering the wedding banquet, with Christ welcoming them at the open door, while the other women are shut out. [SC]



30.

Pieter Jalhea Furnius (ca. 1546-1626)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

The Parable of the Weeds

ca. 1570-1590

Copper engraving

Originally designed by Gerard van Groeningen, a master who was active in Antwerp, and later engraved by Pieter Jalhea Furnius, a printmaker and painter born in Liège, Belgium, this scene represents the Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:36-43). In the parable, a man in the right foreground, dressed lavishly as a ruler, sows good seeds. However, during the night his enemy sows bad ones among his crop. If the weeds were pulled, the wheat would be uprooted as well, so the weeds and wheat must grow together until the harvest.

The lines of the harvest scene converge at the fire in the background where the weeds are being burned while, in the upper right side of the composition, the wheat is being bundled and stored in a barn. From a symbolic standpoint, it could be argued that the man who sows good seeds represents the son of man, while the man who sows bad seeds embodies Satan (the fire clearly brings to mind images of hell), with the wheat that is protected and safe in the barn representing heaven in this allegorical narrative. [SC]



31.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Adoration of the Shepherds

1585

Copper engraving

This engraving depicts the biblical scene of the Adoration of the Shepherds, as an angel appeared before the three shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:8-20). The angel holds a streamer that reads *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*, the Latin words for “Glory to God in heaven and peace on earth to men of good will.” The three shepherds are placed in the foreground as they look up at the angel, overwhelmed with emotion. In the background, to the right, are the town of Bethlehem and the humble structure where Christ was born. Inside, a few figures are gathered around the Christ child, who is lying in the manger. [MR]



32.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Adoration of the Shepherds

1585

Copper engraving with transparent and opaque washes

This print, with its hand coloring, presents a depiction of the biblical episode of the Adoration of the Shepherds, as originally engraved by Gerard van Groeningen. The added color is thinly applied tempera. The unknown artist responsible for adding the pigments – probably in the seventeenth century – emphasized the intense drama of the scene by using only a limited range of strategically placed colors.

The use of brighter tones, such as the blue, red, and yellow on the garments of the figures in the foreground, is purposefully adopted in order to indicate that they are the central characters of the scene. Similarly, the strategic use of the bright yellow that surrounds the angel further enhances its divinity. [MR]



33.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Massacre of the Innocents

1585

Copper engraving

This scene represents the Massacre of the Innocents that took place when Herod the Great, King of the Jews, commanded the execution of all the male infants in Bethlehem to avoid losing his throne to the newborn King of Kings, Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:16-18). Several mothers are shown desperately clinging to their children while attempting to fight the sword-bearing soldiers.

The scene is depicted in accordance with a very scenographic perspective, which allows the artist to include a vast number of figures as they experience the tragedy. In the foreground, the lifeless bodies of many children lie on the ground, tragically foreshadowing the murder of the remaining infants. [MR]



34.

Jan Sadeler (1550-1600)

After Gerard van Groeningen (active 1563-1573)

Massacre of the Innocents

1585

Copper engraving with transparent and opaque washes

This hand-colored engraving offers a striking representation of the Massacre of the Innocents. Here blue and red are used to depict the majority of the figures depicted in the scene. The artist has repeated certain bold tones throughout the work so to draw the eye from the foreground to the background, thus orienting the viewer's attention as it moves across the dramatic scene. In addition, the repetition of a relatively limited palette helps this highly chaotic scene appear cohesive. [MR]



35.

Gerard de Jode (1509-1591)

After Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)

Laudatium Esdras

Copper engraving with transparent and opaque washes

In this engraving a vision of Christ appears to an angel and the scribe Esdras. He is surrounded by a venerating assembly of martyrs on Mount Zion, who have been crowned and given palm leaves as a symbol of their sacrifice (2 Esdras, 2:42-47).

The figures are drawn with an emphasis on their musculature. It appears as though de Vos, known for borrowing from contemporary Italian Renaissance masters, may have been looking at works such as Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* when composing his forms. Here, although the two groups are placed on either side of a distinct compositional divide, the striking palette of color later added to Jode's original print vividly unites the heavenly and the earthly realms within the etching. [ES]



Essays

Holy Beauty or Unholy Marriage?

Discovery, Provenance, and Social-Theological Musings on the Hexham Abbey Bible

Bruce T. Martin

1. Introduction

My task in this essay is to assess the Hexham Abbey Bible from a social-theological perspective. Which is to ask: “What is the meaning or enduring value that the Hexham Abbey Bible presents to us, 350 years after its creation?”

Five years ago, a 1629 Bible was discovered that, in the English-speaking world, is unique, because it includes – interleaved among its New Testament pages – over 100 full-page engravings, dating for the most part to the second half of the 1500’s. As I will show, this Bible – or rather the marriage – between the biblical-text and the picture-engravings, was made in northern England, at Hexham Abbey, around 1660-1661.

Surprisingly, the English-speaking world was very much at odds with the rest of the world when it came to putting pictures into Bibles, due to an interpretation of the Second Commandment against “graven” images. Picture-woodcuts had always been allowable in Bibles all over Europe. But in England, between 1525 and 1660, such sensibilities changed with the religious preferences of the reigning monarch, and it hardly mattered whether they were Catholic or Protestant.

The Great Bible of 1539, for example, sanctioned by King Henry VIII, a newly minted protestant, contained 50 picture-woodcuts of various biblical scenes. But Queen Mary I, his successor, a Catholic, forbade the printing of *any* Bible in English. After her, Queen Elizabeth I, a protestant, authorized the Bishop’s Bible in 1568. This Bible struck a kind of middle ground in its woodcuts of persons and sto-

ries. But after that, no pictures at all were authorized in English Bibles for the next 100 years. In particular, neither the Geneva Bible of 1560, nor the King James Bible of 1611, nor any official Catholic Bible printed in English, nor any of their subsequent editions, contained picture-woodcuts or engravings – at least not officially, until 1660.

The only exception to this rule was the engraved title page, which was considered a necessary expense. As a practical matter, engravings took up an entire page, and so could not be incorporated into a page along with the biblical text. Any engraving that was to be included in a Bible, therefore, had to be printed separately from the text, and then interleaved among the separate pages. Woodcuts, though, were a different matter, since they could easily be incorporated into the biblical text. Nonetheless, in England at any rate, woodcuts were mostly confined to maps or to drawings of Temple furniture. When small picture-woodcuts were used, they were mostly crude and cartoon-like compared to the more realistic looking copper-plate engravings.

Although a handful of interleaved engravings in Bibles are known from the 1630’s, using contemporary prints, they were suspected of fostering Roman Catholic sensibilities, or of breaking the Second Commandment. It was only after the English Civil War and the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660, that the marriage of picture-engravings with the biblical text was condoned. And ever since, publishers of English Bibles have, with great glee and an opportunity to make more money, incorporated picture-engravings into their bibles.

Today, the question is not about Roman Catholic or Pietistic sensibilities, or the Second Commandment, but about interpreting the engravings, both on their own merits and in combination with the biblical text. We are now asking, in a way that was inconceivable 400 years ago: “What effect does having pictures, placed alongside the biblical text, have upon the text, or upon the Bible as a whole?” Biblical scholars today do not in any way concern themselves with pictures, which is odd because so many bibles these days are filled with pictures, and one will often see special editions with images by well-known artists (e.g., Dore, Rembrandt, Chagall). So, the question returns once again to us, 400 years later, whether such an enterprise as interleaving pictures with the biblical text is inspiring or beguiling; whether, in such cases, we have created a work of Holy Beauty or an Unholy Marriage? I hope to bring some clarity to this question, by reference to the Hexham Abbey Bible, the earliest known English Bible with picture-engravings dating to the 1500s.

2. Discovery

Follow me, if you will, in a thought experiment. Imagine that you are a caveman or cavewoman – or, more precisely, a cave-child, 80,000 years ago, at the beginnings of human society. You are a fully-human child, just 6 years old – or rather 6 summers old – and your name is Sunshine, because the day you were born was bright and sun-shiny. It is mid-morning and you have just woken up from a good night’s sleep. You climb out of your family’s bear-hide blanket, that had kept you warm at night, and you make your way to the mouth of the cave, where your mother is tending the community fire pit.

You approach your mother, and gently tug at her deer-skin apron to get her attention. She looks at you and smiles. You say, pointing to your mouth, words that translate as “Mamma, I’m hungry.” And she says, pointing behind her, “Over there, Sunshine.”

Still continuing our thought experiment. What do you suppose the child and mother were thinking when they uttered those words to each other: “Mamma, I’m hungry” and “Over there, Sunshine”?

Now – in the interest of full disclosure – I am not a cultural anthropologist, nor am I a sociologist or an art historian. I’m merely a theologian. Still, I am fairly sure that when the child said “Mamma, I’m hungry” (pointing to his mouth) he or she was not thinking “I hope I get an Egg-McMuffin, like I got yesterday.” And I’m quite certain that when the mother said “Over there” (pointing to the bowl behind her) she wasn’t thinking “Go to the pantry and get the box of Fruit-loops; milk is in the fridge.” So, if they weren’t thinking that, what might they have been thinking?

In my own imagination, I suppose the child could have been thinking the following: “Yesterday, mamma gave me the most delicious blue berries that she and her sisters had picked the day before. They were so much better than the tasteless pale orange berries I usually get. I hope that mamma saved some of those blue ones for me this morning. Mamma, I’m hungry.” And, in my imagination, I suppose that the mother might have been thinking: “Its mid-morning already, and the clan has already eaten. I’m glad that I saved some of those blue berries for my little Sunshine. Where did I put them? Oh yes, in the bowl behind me, along with some left-over nuts. Sunshine will love them, too, I’m sure, and they are good for him. They’ll put some meat on his bones for the coming winter. Over there, Sunshine!”

OK, you can stop being a cave-child; but now I’d like to reflect with you more carefully about thinking itself, and about communicating what we think. I promise that it has everything to do with the Hexham Abbey Bible. What looks, at first, like a simple exchange between child and mother, 80,000 years ago, is in reality quite complex. And I’m presuming that what was true then is true today.

From our thought experiment, I hope you noticed, among other things, that there was quite a lot of thought *behind* what was actually said or gestured. It’s not that there were complex social concepts bouncing around in their heads, such as love or duty or justice, but there was a story, a narrative, a snippet of experience, that crystallized into just a few words or gestures. Before a single word was uttered, or the slightest gesture made, both child and mother presupposed a much larger story out of the deep well of their experiences. This larger story is the “context”

out of which our much smaller stories are told. What we communicate is only a fraction of what we are actually thinking. So, when we are presented with a text, or an engraving – such as we have in the Hexham Abbey Bible – we need to realize that there is a much larger story or context that was not told, and could not be told, within or behind the story that was actually told.

Now let's take a closer look at communication itself. It may seem obvious that, as physical beings, our personal presence is extended in the world, and thereby exerts "power" on the world, not merely by our voice and its various inflections, but by our gestures and by our tools. We use whatever non-verbals we have at hand to communicate alongside the verbal – it's what we do. We communicate best, in fact, when our verbal and non-verbal speech-components complement and reinforce each other. Our verbals carry a certain tone and intensity. Our non-verbals, too, take on various forms: from facial and body gestures to written and graphic representations to technological instruments. Like a coin with two sides, we communicate with each other, as much as possible, both verbally and non-verbally.

What is not so obvious, is *how* we think – long before we begin to communicate. How we think is not obvious because it is a universal experience, it is not debatable, and is therefore not a subject of concern to almost everyone. Yet *how we think* is the basis for *how we communicate*. And how we communicate is vital for evaluating or assessing *what* we communicate. Thinking and communicating are made from the same cloth.

Most of us don't stop and think about how we think, but those who have thought about it [e.g., R. Jenson, *On Thinking the Human*] tell us – and our experience bears this out – that whenever we think about something, or dream about something, we always form a picture of it in our minds. What we think about can be real or imagined, but we always form a picture of it, or a series of pictures, like snapshots or frames in a movie. This envisioning, in our mind's eye, does not have to be very clear and sharp, and most often isn't, because they are incomplete and vague representations [*Vorstellung*] of what we are thinking, our concepts [*Begriff*] as we call them.

Our mental representations of our concepts are the medium by which we think. We cannot, it seems, have one without the other. Our representations, moreover, rarely if ever stand alone; they are connected to one another like frames in a movie. What we think, therefore, whether our concepts or our memories, always comes to us in story form, and thus in pictures.

So here's the first point I'd like to make, as we begin to understand the significance of the Hexham Abbey Bible: there is no human thought or communication without some kind of symbolic representation, or picture-world, both to think it and to express it. When we think, we do so in pictures; and when we communicate, we do so in word-pictures.

The second point I'd like to make is that, however an actual communication comes to be crystallized into words and gestures, there is always more behind them that is left unsaid and uncommunicated. And that "more" is a story that can never quite be told in full. It is the "context" for what is actually expressed, whether verbally or non-verbally, whether as a text or as an engraving.

There is third point I'd like to make as well, but I wasn't adept enough to include it in my thought experiment. Whenever we express what we are thinking, we are creating; we are making things that did not exist before. And the things we make, no matter how simple or complex, always, always, have an aesthetic or pleasing quality to them. They are, for the time and place in which they are made, both useful and, if you will permit me to say, artful. Perhaps we should also say, beautiful – at least to its maker. We can't help ourselves; we just do it. Everything we do or touch or speak, whether it is a simple tool or a complex communication event, are works of art. In this respect, we are all artists!

These reflections, I submit, have profound implications for assessing the relevance of the Hexham Abbey Bible. With these reflections tucked away safely in mind, let me tell you a tale of discovery.

My interest in rare bibles and in bible manuscripts began in the mid-1970s, while at seminary to become a pastor. I was fascinated by the old books and bibles I discovered as I wandered through the stacks in the dark basement of the library. I found myself

captivated by the history of those many communities of faith that had kept these books and bibles, as precious relics for posterity. So, when the occasion arrived, some 30 years later, to develop a business that I could count on as being legal and moral, I began to collect, and then to resell, antique bibles and manuscripts, some dating to the early 1200s. Every day, I was fascinated by what I was doing. I was in hog heaven!

One of my first great acquisitions was a 1629 King James Bible, a first edition from the Cambridge University Press – the same edition, it turns out, as the Hexham Abbey Bible. Without this acquisition, and my subsequent appreciation of the 1629 Cambridge Bible as one of the most beautiful and elegantly printed of all the early English Bibles, I would not likely have noticed, or purchased, the 1629 Bible that is the centerpiece of our Exhibit.

Besides being the first official editorial revision of the King James version, the 1629 Cambridge Bible was the first to compete for business with the King's printers in London, who until that time had a monopoly on printing Bibles. Having a monopoly, the king's printers had no incentive, either to maintain or to improve on the quality of the bibles they printed. Therefore, ever since the monumental 1611 first edition, all editions of the "Authorized" Bible (the official name for the King James Bible) suffered from mediocre to poor quality; except, of course, those few Bibles that were specially printed and bound for wealthy clients.

So, when Cambridge University was granted a license from the king to print bibles, the University spared no effort to give the king's printers a run for their money, and possibly break their monopoly. Cambridge – very unusually – printed their Bible on no less than seven different qualities of paper, or "issues," in order to cater to (and sell to) a wide variety of clients. This proved to be critical for the creation of the Hexham Abbey Bible because one of those paper issues, a very thin rag-linen, was exactly the type of paper used to produce the engravings that were later inserted into one of those Bibles.

Another unusual aspect of the Cambridge first edition is its size, a medium folio about 12" x 8" (give or take a few millimeters). According to B.J. McMullin,

lin, a scholar whose work on the Cambridge Bible is unsurpassed, it was thought that the Bible would be used chiefly in churches, and therefore handled with great care, so most of them were bound using cloth or velvet materials. As it turned out, the Bible was quite popular apart from its church use, and as a consequence many Bibles suffered premature damage to their text due to inadequate binding materials.

To make matters worse, some of the seven issues (or "formes" as McMullin calls them) were made with inferior paper, though many were not. Because of these paper and binding problems, but also because the Bible itself was so beautifully formatted and printed, it is no wonder that the 1629 Cambridge Bible is today among the most prized of all the early English bibles, particularly if it is still in good shape.

With this knowledge (thanks largely to McMullin's research) – and with the experience of having purchased other 1629 Cambridge Bibles in the meantime – I placed a bid for what was called a 1629 Cambridge New Testament.

Now, auction houses are notorious for providing scant information about Bibles, so all I had to go on was a picture of the title page, and its description as a New Testament. I also knew, thanks to *Herbert's Catalogue of English Bibles* (1968), that in 1629 no New Testament was officially issued by the Cambridge University Press apart from its Old Testament counterpart. It figured, then, that this 1629 New Testament might just be something rather odd. Luckily for me, I was the winning bidder. I was in for a treat!

The moment of discovery came when I received the package and opened it up, very carefully. When I lifted the book from the box, already I could tell that the binding was fragile, so I laid it on the table, and opened the cover. At first, I was surprised to see a Book of Common Prayer – which was almost always included in Bibles during this era, but usually bound before the Old Testament. So I didn't expect to see a Book of Common Prayer along with what was advertised to be a New Testament only.

But then came the New Testament title page, in perfect condition. I turned the page, and there I saw, for the first time, a full-page engraving – and then another, and another, seven in a row! I was astound-

ed, because I had never heard of engravings in Bibles this old, and what I knew about engravings wouldn't have filled a mouse's tooth. But there they were! I quickly flipped through the rest of the New Testament, and saw so many wonderful engravings that my heart was pounding. Not only were the Bible pages in near-pristine condition, but the engravings were on exactly the same kind of paper as the biblical text. I was perplexed and excited all at the same time. What kind of engravings were these, and how and why did they get into this New Testament?

So I did a bit of research. I looked them up on the internet (of course) and found that most were listed on the British Museum's Online Collection. They seemed to come from the 1500s, but that was so preposterous that, at first, I couldn't believe it. It took several days for me to be assured that, yes, they really were from the 1500s. I then called the Portland Museum of Art, and made arrangements to see the curator of prints and drawings. With 115 engravings altogether, I was sure that this was a major find – I just didn't know at that time how big a find it was, and it wasn't simply because of the engravings!

As it turned out, the curator had been on the job just four days when we met, and was not yet acquainted with the Museum's collection. So she put me in touch with Professor Ricardo De Mambro Santos, an art history professor at Willamette University, whom she knew was an expert in this period of Netherlandish engravings. After a lengthy stop at the library to consult the New Hollstein reference books, I ended up in Professor De Mambro Santos' office. When he saw what I had brought, his face lit up like a kid on Christmas morning, and exclaimed, "My friends!" – referring to Heemskerck, Wierix, Galle, de Jode, Goltzius, Sadeler, Collaert, de Vos, and several other Northern Renaissance masters. And, being the teacher that he is, he proceeded to show me what makes these engravings so important and exciting – my first "Aha!" moment.

We immediately decided that we would have an exhibit to showcase the Bible and its engravings to the world. He would research the engravings, and I would research the Bible and its provenance. Of course, at that point, knowing next to nothing about the engravings, I was primarily interested in show-

ing the Bible. As it turns out, it is the Bible *plus* the engravings that is so unique and compelling.

While Professor De Mambro Santos was doing his analysis of the engravings, I began to research the Bible. What I discovered, after five years of looking – and this is the truly remarkable thing – is that, to my knowledge, the Hexham Abbey Bible is the *earliest* English Bible with full page engravings, of any sort – and the *only* English Bible with engravings dating to the 1500s. These were mostly printed between 1565 and 1585, with a handful dating to the 1640s.

Are there any English Bibles similar to the Hexham Abbey Bible? And what is the history of extra-illustration? There are literally a handful of extant English Bibles, dated 1633 to 1638, containing contemporary engravings by Robert Young, which were then bound into bibles by Robert Peake. These so-called "Peake" Bibles were immediately regarded as "popish" (a word of derision in Protestant circles) because the Young engravings lent themselves to a Roman Catholic interpretation of the biblical text. In Puritan England, the experiment didn't last long.

The next period of extra-illustrated English Bibles came at about the same time as the Hexham Abbey Bible, from 1660-1680. These Bibles contain contemporary prints by such artists as Hoet, Picart, Ogilby, and van Hove. One Bible, though, that is arguably closest to the Hexham Abbey Bible, is a 1679 King James Bible – extra-illustrated with 124 Old Master engravings printed by Nicholas Visscher in the 1640s.

Aside from these two periods of extra-illustration, and one similar to the Hexham Abbey Bible, we should note two specific outliers. The first is the Little Gidding Harmony Bible of 1630-1635, which is a cut-and-paste of contemporary engravings and biblical texts. Its purpose was to provide the Little Gidding community (Anglican, founded by Nicholas Ferrer, 1592-1637) with a Bible containing a single Gospel story. This was a "harmony" of the Four Gospels with lots of illustrations from whatever print media was available at the time. About a dozen copies are extant. The second outlier builds on the idea of adding portrait engravings to historical works, first popularized by James Granger in the 1770s. This method, known as 'grangerizing,' adds mate-

rials from other sources into already existing books, without rebinding them, as a way of personalizing them or enhancing their aesthetic charm. Grangerizing soon became a popular pastime, and reached its zenith with what is known as the Kitto Bible. This Bible was originally published in 1855 as an Illustrated History of the Bible, but was “grangerized” over many decades into what now stands as a whopping 60 volumes with 30,000 prints and various other items.

The Kitto Bible contains every imaginable sort of art media from a vast period of time – back to the early 1500s. Included, often in duplicate or triplicate, are engravings from many well-known masters, but also paintings, drawings, and anything else that seemed worthy – and much was worthy! The Kitto Bible is currently at the Huntington Library, along with 40 or so other “grangerized” books.

Unlike the two outliers, the Hexham Abbey Bible is bound and interleaved exclusively with Old Master engravings, not pasted in or tipped in. Like the interleaved Bibles of the 1630s and the 1660s, however, the Hexham Abbey Bible started as an independently published Bible of suitable size and paper quality, then disbound 30 years later and interleaved with 106 full-page engravings (some are two to a page, uncut, making a total of 115 engravings). Then at some point it was rebound. It is gauffered on all sides, meaning that geometric lines and symbols were embossed on the edges of the pages, after being gilded in gold foil. Gauffering was generally done, not only to make a nice impression, but to prevent oxidation and deterioration of the paper.

The Hexham Abbey Bible is therefore not a grangerized Bible, because nothing was added in to it over time, or was expected to be added. Nor was it meant to be mass produced. But it did have a specific purpose, and to that we now turn.

3. Provenance of the Hexham Abbey Bible

So far, we have set the stage for the creation of the Hexham Abbey Bible, and have claimed its uniqueness among all known English Bibles. We turn now to the Hexham Abbey Bible itself, to determine its

provenance, who made it, how and why it was made, and why we are calling it the “Hexham Abbey Bible.”

To begin with, the Hexham Abbey Bible consists of a Book of Common Prayer, a New Testament, and a Book of Psalms set to English Meeter, in that order, all dated 1629. Since only a whole Bible was offered for sale that year, these three sections must have been disbound from a complete Bible – the Old Testament and Apocrypha taken out – and then recombined, along with 115 Old Master engravings.

The most likely reason this was done, even without the engravings, was to create a light-weight, New Testament and Prayer Book, for someone’s personal use, either in public or private worship. If this is what happened, then it is likely that there is an Old Testament companion volume to go along with the Prayer Book and New Testament combination. And if similar engravings were also added to the Old Testament volume, then, just possibly, there is an Old Testament Bible out there, somewhere, with Old Master engravings in it – waiting to be found!

An odd feature of the Hexham Abbey Bible is its near pristine condition, with nary a mark or smudge on it, except for the first few pages of the Book of Common Prayer. (Because the BCP is soiled, whereas the rest of the Bible is not, it is likely that the BCP originated from a different copy of the 1629 Cambridge Bible than the rest of the Bible). Further, there are none of the usual biographical markers, such as births and deaths, that many owners wrote in their Bibles. And there are no ink markings or dog-ears or tears in the pages, or water stains, or blood.

Why should that be, if it was designed, along with the engravings, for regular worship purposes? Being in the rare Bible business now for 13 years, I have never seen an early English Bible in such good condition, overall, so I figured that something odd must have happened for a book designed for worship not to have been used. But then it occurred to me that, in 1662, a new Book of Common Prayer was published, to unify factions of the Church that, for their own reasons, disliked or refused to use the previous version. It also occurred to me that, when King Charles II returned to England from exile in 1660, a new religious tone had also returned, that

was accommodating, or at least more open, to putting picture-engravings in Bibles (hence, as we have seen, the second wave of extra-illustrated Bibles in 17th-century England).

Here was a confluence of events, in 1660 and 1662, that suggested the possibility that the Hexham Abbey Bible was created around 1660 or 1661, when it was safe once more to insert engravings into a Bible. But with the advent of a new Book of Common Prayer in early 1662, all previous Prayer Books – including, of course, the Hexham Abbey Bible (whether finished or not) – were suddenly obsolete and thus unusable, at least in public worship. With this scenario as our working hypothesis, we now had to discover who had owned the Bible back in the early 1660s.

The Hexham Abbey Bible offered two indicators of prior ownership. One is an old library bookplate pasted onto the inside of the front cover, with a coat of arms and a name written: “Rev. Robert Clarke.” The other indicator is an egret or swan embossed on the bottom of the outer spine. Happily, the bookplate also depicts an egret or swan, just like the one on the spine. We can therefore conclude that whoever bound the Bible is the same person who owned it. Unfortunately, however, the name Robert Clarke is like the name John Smith, so his identification, even as a Reverend, was impossible.

The key to the correct identification of Rev. Robert Clarke turns out to be the egret on the bookplate and spine. In 2013, as a matter of sheer serendipity, I found the same bookplate and the same embossed egret on a book that was for sale online – only the owner’s name was not Robert Clarke but Sloughter Clarke. For me, this was a very unusual name! A quick search on the internet led me to a sale of property, in the late 1700s, in the parish of Hexham, in Northumberland, England.

Sloughter Clarke (1741-1820) and Robert Clarke (1771-1824), father and son, had been Lecturers at Hexham Abbey – the father from 1766 to 1801, and the son from 1801 to 1824. A Lecturer, at that time, was a priest commissioned by the owner of the Abbey to preside over all church related affairs; and often to adjudicate low-level civil disputes as well. And since Hexham Abbey could trace its his-

tory to 674 as a Benedictine Abbey, the Lectureship there was a plumb assignment. The Abbey continues to this day as the parish church of Hexham.

Since the egret on the family crest is identical to the egret on the spine of the Hexham Abbey Bible, it is nearly certain that Sloughter Clarke had the Bible bound in the form that we have it now, and that his son, Robert Clarke, inherited it and affixed it with his family bookplate and signature. The dating of the current binding to the turn of the 19th century, and possibly several decades earlier, is supported by a recent close inspection by Susan Lunas, the conservator recommended to me by the Hallie Ford Museum.

But this information does not yet take us to the origin of the Hexham Abbey Bible. Since the Bible is in near-pristine condition (apart from the first few pages), it figured to have lain on a shelf somewhere, unused for 350 years. On that conjecture, I traced the history of Lectureships at Hexham Abbey back to 1660. If someone created the Bible in 1660 or 1661, and shelved it in 1662, the Bible could have remained at Hexham Abbey until it was discovered and rebound by Sloughter Clarke somewhere between 1780 and 1800. This is a reasonable hypothesis, but it depends on the Bible being unbound, or poorly bound, at the time of its rebinding.

It turns out that the Lecturer of Hexham Abbey in 1660 was a well-known and highly respected clergyman named George Ritschel (1616-1683). His story, what little we know of it, is fascinating. And it is this story that leads Professor De Mambro Santos and me to conclude that George Ritschel was in fact the creator of the Hexham Abbey Bible – and that it was he who married those Old Master engravings to the biblical text, to form what was at that time a useful and artful Prayer Book and New Testament combination.

So, on this 402nd anniversary of his birth, who was George Ritschel? I’ll tell you the short story (for academic details, see Professor De Mambro Santos’s essay in this catalogue, *Touching Heavens*). According to his biographers (see Roger Howell, Jr., and Robert Fitzgibbon), Ritschel was born into a Lutheran family in Bohemia, in central Europe, in what is now the Czech Republic. Shortly after his education at the University of Strasbourg, Roman Catholicism

became the only acceptable religion in Bohemia (besides Judaism!), and life promised to be difficult if you didn't convert! Ritschel, by now a Lutheran by choice, chose not to convert, so he "renounced" his share of the family farm and moved away – presumably because he wanted a career in academia – but specifically because he was hired to do research for the well-known humanist, Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670).

Ritschel's research was focused on Comenius' theory, or "method" as he called it, that young people, especially children, are taught best through the addition or juxtaposition or combination of a given text with naturalistic-looking images pertaining to that text, as explained by Professor De Mambro Santos. For Comenius, since the human mind is easily captivated and informed by bold images, or "ocular demonstrations" as he called them, these impressions – together with a written text or oral presentation – make for a quicker and more engaging grasp of the material. When a text (any text, according to this theory) is supplemented with detailed images pertaining to that text, the subject to be learned is both enlivened and etched in one's memory. Imagine: text and images together! "Well, my, my my!" – to quote Detective Kenda (retired, from Colorado, USA; featured on Homicide Hunter, a reality-TV series).

Comenius's theory of "ocular demonstrations" did not fall from the sky, but was based on a broad appreciation for creation (from the Bible), and for things created by people, as reflections of the glory of God, akin, surprisingly, to the Greek Orthodox conception of icons. As Comenius opined in his book *The Great Didactic*,

God Himself has filled every corner of this grand theatre of the world with paintings, sculptures, and images as living representatives of His wisdom, and wants us to be instructed by their means... [T]hrough the work of Divine Providence, all things have been made with perfect harmony, so that superior things can be represented by inferior ones, absent ones by means of present ones, and the invisible things by means of visible ones. (32, 41)

For Comenius – as explains Professor De Mambro Santos – pictures (or engravings) can be useful in instruction, not only because they are "representatives" of God's handiwork in creation, but because they are in "perfect harmony" with the "invisible" and "superior" truths of God, presumably love, mercy, righteousness, and the like. On this basis, Comenius was convinced that his "method" was equally applicable, if not more so, to religious teachings and to the Bible.

Ritschel was tasked with tracing the philosophical pillars of Comenius' educational theory, but he had a falling out with Comenius, a few years later, when Comenius rejected his work as being too technical for the more elementary book he intended to write (*The Great Didactic*, published in 1657). So instead of scrapping all his hard work, Ritschel wrote his own book, on metaphysics (*Metaphysical Contemplations on the Nature of Things*, 1648), which was a big hit in Germany; but in England, not so much. Still, this book, more than any other of the 5 or 6 that he eventually wrote, earned him a reputation for great learning. In fact, Ritschel was been called the most important philosopher ever to have immigrated from Bohemia to England.

Ritschel's early research on Comenius' behalf, as well as a couple of tutoring positions for the children of noblemen, took him to Holland, Denmark, and Germany, before his falling out with Comenius landed him permanently in England. Presumably, these countries offered Ritschel an excellent opportunity to become familiar with a wide range of Northern Renaissance art, including that which is represented in the Hexham Abbey Bible.

My interest in Ritschel's biography, up to this point, has been to show that he was a committed Lutheran – to the extent of leaving his country of birth, rather than convert to Roman Catholicism; that he was exceedingly well educated in philosophy – even if his prowess wasn't recognized by those around him; and that he was intimately familiar, both in theory and in practice, with Comenius' theory that texts and pictures are a natural combination for learning, at least on the elementary level.

I'm going to skip over the intermediate portion of Ritschel's career, in which he was a successful head-

master of a grammar school in England – quite naturally, I’d say, given his experience to that point. The school was in an area that was known for welcoming Bohemian exiles, and he likely had some extended family living there. Then, after 9 or 10 years of being a teacher, and quite suddenly, Rirschel resigned his position and took up (in 1657) a preaching position – the coveted Lectureship – in the neighboring town of Hexham. The reason for this change is unclear, but I note that his son, George, Jr., was born that year, which could have prodded him to increase his income as well as his social standing. But that’s pure speculation on my part.

What we know is that, in order to make a career change, from teacher to preacher, which in the context of the times was rather more respected than a teacher, Rirschel had to become, what he had thus far refused to become: a political animal. It is this change in orientation, more than any other consideration, I submit, that prompted the creation of the Hexham Abbey Bible.

No one knows exactly how Rirschel obtained his preaching credentials, or exactly why he was chosen, but the folks doing the hiring at Hexham Abbey were Puritans who, “in theory, were purged of Royalists and Anglicans, and loyal to the Parliament.” Rirschel signed a declaration of loyalty to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, and was hired on as Lecturer. Yet just a few years later, during the Restoration, when it was no longer politically correct to be a Puritan – that is, around 1660, Rirschel “denied that he had ever been an active Puritan.” Moreover, according to his biographers, Rirschel later said, when reflecting on this period in his life, that “he had never been asked to express disagreement with the Augsburg Confession.” (This 1530 Confession is the standard by which Lutherans are identified.)

What prompted Rirschel to create the Hexham Abbey Bible? The period, from 1657 to 1660, that is, at the tail end of the English Civil War (in which Parliament was set against the Monarchy, and Puritans and Independents were set against Royalists and Anglicans), was one in which a teacher or preacher had to navigate, on a local scale, a succession of political and religious sensibilities – that is, if he wished to remain gainfully employed.

Having wormed his way into a preaching job at Hexham Abbey, as a Puritan or at least as a Puritan sympathizer, Rirschel, in 1660, found that he needed to persuade his new bosses, that he was, after all, an Anglican!

So Rirschel wrote a book, published in 1661, that defended Anglicanism against Puritan charges of idolatry and superstition (*Dissertatio De Ceremoniis Ecclesiae Anglicanae*). The book, which “contain[ed] strong attacks on the Puritans”, was, tellingly, dedicated to John Cosin (1594–1672) who in 1660 returned from exile to become Bishop of Durham, and thus became Rirschel’s immediate superior. Once again, Rirschel was ingratiating himself to others, this time to his new Anglican bosses – in order, presumably, to keep his well-respected, cushy job. At any rate, Rirschel did keep his job, wrote several more books, and lived happily ever after.

Professor De Mambro Santos and I both agree that Rirschel’s political shenanigans forms the backstory for the creation of the Hexham Abbey Bible, and that the rich heritage of Hexham Abbey, through the Rirschel family of Lecturers and the Clarke family of Lecturers, provides good reason to dub the Bible that Rirschel created, *The Hexham Abbey Bible*. We admittedly do not know for whom Rirschel created the Bible, but that it was done in order to shore up his job and to appease his Anglican masters seems clear enough.

So let’s turn to the Hexham Abbey Bible and see what Rirschel did with it. On a broad scale, Rirschel undoubtedly wanted to create a worship book that was grounded on the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, but one that incorporated, back-handedly, anti-Puritan values. He used Comenius’ “method” of combining vivid pictures alongside a text, in this case the New Testament, to create a book that was worthy of either public or private worship – a book that would signal to all the world, or at least to his Anglican masters, that he, George Rirschel, was a true-blue Anglican. And if anyone asked, he could easily point to his recent book on Anglican rituals (1661) to defend himself against any suspected Puritan leanings.

In order for Rirschel to create what he did, he needed a suitable Book of Common Prayer and a

suitable New Testament. He found one in a King James Bible rather than a Geneva Bible (which we may recall was the “Bible of the Puritans”). It didn’t matter what year it was, but the 1629 Cambridge Bible proved suitable for Ritschel because one of its seven paper issues (“forme” E in McMullin’s study) was made with the same light-weight, fine, linen rag paper as the copper plate engravings that he intended to interleave into the New Testament. The 1629 Cambridge Bible, a medium folio bible, was also suitable because it was large enough, at 12” x 8”, to hold the engravings. This particular Bible, with its matching paper type and paper size, to the engravings, was exactly what Ritschel needed.

After the Book of Common Prayer, and after the New Testament title page, but within the New Testament only, from the Gospels (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) through Acts, Ritschel interleaved Old Master engravings – matching the storyline of the New Testament with those of the engravings. In nearly every case, the story depicted by the engraving precedes the story told by the New Testament text. In some instances, there are several engravings bunched together, but, again, they precede their Gospel-story counterparts.

As an aside, I can only speculate why Ritschel chose to use 16th-century engravings rather than 17th-century ones. Most likely, these were engravings that he had compiled from his earlier travels in Denmark and Holland, during his research for Comenius. Nonetheless, Ritschel did avail himself of a few engravings from the 1640s.

I’d like now to take a close look at 3 examples of Ritschel’s work, from the Hexham Abbey Bible, to see how they comport with his overall project – that is, not merely to enhance one’s comprehension of the biblical text (per Comenius), but to showcase his Anglican sensibilities (per Ritschel). There is, of necessity, a certain paradox at work here. On the one hand, the project of adding pictures alongside a text was, in theory, designed to increase the comprehensions of *children*. On the other hand, the project of creating an Anglican worship book that contained Puritanically offensive engravings, was designed to persuade intelligent *adults* of Ritschel’s current theological stance. Did it work? We will nev-

er know, because a new Book of Common Prayer was published in early 1662 – making the Hexham Abbey Bible, possibly incomplete at the time, obsolete and, for all intents and purposes, useless (if artful). So the Hexham Abbey Bible was set aside, until Sloughter Clarke (finding it at Hexham Abbey, or having obtained it through family connections with the Ritschels) either bound it for the first time, or rebound it to his liking.

Fast-forward 350 years later, where we are in a neutral position to evaluate the Hexham Abbey Bible, not only with Ritschel’s eyes but with our own. I have selected three examples from the Hexham Abbey Bible. One is relatively simple, one is frighteningly dramatic, and one is quite complex.

My first example – the relatively simple one – is the one at which the Bible is currently opened for display, at the Hallie Ford Exhibit [Catalogue 2.1]. This is a story, near the beginning of the Gospel of John, where Jesus attends a wedding, and turns water into wine. Oops! What I just said is an interpretation, isn’t it? To say that this is a wedding, or that water is turned into wine, requires that the text be read, or remembered. But if we haven’t yet read the text, the first thing we notice is Jesus – with a nimbus around his head – at a grand party, directing a servant to pour some liquid into a cup; and that liquid, judging by the well in the background, is water. Without reading the text, that is about as much as you can squeeze out of this picture.

But if one already knows the story, one suspects that this is a common wedding to which Jesus was invited, despite the kingly laurel on the groom and the crown on the bride; and that Jesus is in the process of changing water into an excellent wine. (What should we make of the little gremlin-face on one of the water jugs? Or the butt-crack action on one of the guests? Or that Jesus is barefooted?)

Quite apart from what the engraver, Johannes Wierix, may have thought: What does Ritschel expect his readership to get from this picture, even granting that they know something of the story beforehand? We cannot know for certain, but I expect that Ritschel wanted them to see Jesus turning water into wine, which would be a miracle, or a “sign” as the Gospel writer put it. I’m not an art historian,

so perhaps I don't see the finer nuances of Wierix's design – or maybe they're just not very important to me. But in this picture, there doesn't seem to be anything else going on besides a miracle.

My second example is one that, for me, is frighteningly dramatic, the most dramatic in the Hexham Abbey Bible [See *Touching Heavens*, ill. 3] – and very likely the model for Rembrandt's painting *Storm on the Sea of Galilee*. What do we see here, even granting that we have read or heard the story beforehand? Does Ritschel want us to anticipate another miracle in which Jesus calms the sea, along with the fears of his disciples?

This is the story, originally from the Gospel of Mark, in which Jesus and his disciples are on the Sea of Galilee, on their way to the other side. A storm churns and blows mightily, and threatens the lives of everyone. So Jesus, in the text, “rebukes” the storm, and all is well again. But if we look *only* at the picture, which comes *before* the text, what do we see? Quite naturally, the scene immediately grabs our attention, and we empathize with the disciples who are beside themselves with fright. The only thing out of place in this scene, that would be puzzling if we didn't know the story, is that Jesus is asleep at the rear of the boat, oblivious to the danger surrounding them.

Is it enough, for Ritschel, that we are captivated by this vivid and dramatic scene (that Professor De Mambro Santos eloquently described in his essay)? Is it enough, for Ritschel, that we are drawn to wonder why in the world Jesus is asleep, when the rest of us are scared to death? Maybe so. Maybe it is enough that we are led, by this picture, to read or reread the New Testament text and to discover, perhaps, some deeper meaning. But that deeper meaning is not shown to us in the engraving! At most – staying with the picture here – we are beset with the jarring contrast between the disciples' fear and Jesus' calm. For me, despite all the special effects, it is this contrast alone that makes the engraving a worthy conveyor of the Gospel story. But more on that later.

My third example is one that is quite complex, yet shockingly direct. It's an engraving by Hans Collaert, and it appears twice in the Hexham Abbey Bible, one toward the end of Matthew, and the other

toward the end of Luke. [See *Touching Heavens*, ill. 9-10] (The one in Matthew – this one – is a second state printing, dated to 1585. And the one at the end of Luke is a third state printing, dated to 1643. A first state printing, dated to 1563, is among those in the exhibit that represent different developments in Northern Renaissance art during the second half of the 1500s. So together, all three states of this complex engraving are represented in the exhibit.)

Here we have, very dramatically, a scene of the crucifixion of Jesus, and we must ask ourselves, once more, What does Ritschel intend for us to see, or get out of seeing, in this picture – even presuming that we know something already of the story?

Again, I'm not an art historian, but neither were those who were reasonably expected to use the Hexham Abbey Bible. At this point, I'm simply being casual in my observations rather than theological. What was the user expected to see? There are three men being tortured to death, by being affixed to crosses, in different ways. In the center is Jesus. We know that this one is Jesus in spite of the fact that he is not the foremost one in the picture – that would be the one to our left. If we know the story, Jesus is recognized by the nails, by the crown of thorns, and by the title on the cross, INRI (an acronym which in Latin stands for “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews”), providing the reason, or at least the charge, for which Jesus was crucified.

We see, then, a crucifixion, or rather three crucifixions. We notice that none of the three have yet died, that the one in the foreground is looking back towards Jesus, and that – in a small grotto in the background, a man is kneeling in a prayerful position. We see that Jesus is being crucified (without noticeable blood), the sky is darkened, the wind is blowing, and death is near. What is there to understand from this picture, other than death? If there is any Good News here, it was certainly not evident on that day.

The only hint that something strange is happening, is the man praying in the grotto. We simply don't have, in this picture, enough information to know what is going on here, or why, or what impact this event might have on our lives. Even those who know the story behind this picture, and the story yet to come, cannot discover that in this picture.

I suspect that those who see this picture in the Hexham Abbey Bible, are being asked, by Ritschel, to contemplate, like the man in the grotto, the meaning of this event. I can only imagine what a *child* could be thinking about such a scene! Confusion, no doubt. By Ritschel's own standard, that pictures are to assist in one's understanding of the subject matter, then this picture – like our other two examples – does not help us in understanding the biblical text.

But perhaps I'm being too hard on Ritschel. No one, not even Jesus' closest disciples, understood what was happening right in front of them. The jars of water looked like jars of water, even if they were filled with wine. The storm on the sea of Galilee was really a storm, and all storms blow themselves out. And the crucifixion of Jesus, like countless other crucifixions, ended in death. At least that is what the disciples saw, and what the pictures depict. The question is, therefore, if it is even possible for pictures to tell us anything more than what appears in the immediate present?

Am I asking too much of these pictures? Does Ritschel ask too much of them – when, like individual frames in a movie, they can only tell us what is evident to our eyes at the moment, disconnected from the frames that might follow? Realistically – and Ritschel the teacher was all about realism – is it even possible to understand a story before it has reached its end? I don't think so. The story of Jesus, like any other story, achieves its meaning only from the perspective of its ending.

4. Theological Musings

Because I'm a theologian, I'd like now to offer a theological perspective on the Hexham Abbey Bible – it is, after all, a Bible! How might a theologian assess the project that George Ritschel intended, but was cut short by the new Book of Common Prayer? (He might have considered another try, with the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, a different Bible, and a different set of engravings, but as far as we know he never again worked on a similar project.)

I think that what Ritschel did with the Hexham Abbey Bible, as we now have it, was entirely in line

with the cultural trends (his *Zeitgeist*) around him. As pertains to the Bible, one could even say that he was a trend-setter, even though his work never saw the light of day. As we have seen in Comenius' ground-breaking work, the technology was there and the time was ripe, for appreciating the combination of pictures and words. The era of pictures was leaping from canvas to paper to printed books. The question posed by the Hexham Abbey Bible was, and still is: Could – or should – the same be done for the Bible?

Keep in mind that, apart from England, the world – whether Protestant or Catholic – had no problem at all with paring pictures with the Biblical text. Martin Luther's Bible of 1534, for example, is filled with picture-woodcuts, in blazing color. Adding small to medium woodcuts to Bibles was simply following the pattern of many illuminated manuscripts in the pre-Gutenberg era, with elaborate miniatures and illuminated capitals. From the outset, we should remember, Protestants were about protesting more important matters than adding pictures in a book. And Anglicans, though also protestants, were not so much protesting Roman Catholic theology as they were the power of the Pope to tell their monarch what to do. Graven images, on paper or otherwise, were not a problem! Puritans, however, protested religious images of every sort (per the Second Commandment against "graven" images), fearing that they might become idols unto themselves. When Ritschel inserted full-sized engravings into a Bible, alongside a Book of Common Prayer, he was making a bold theological statement of solidarity *with* the Anglicans and *against* the Puritans.

As we saw in our thought experiment, human communication is always wanting to be conveyed both verbally and non-verbally, to the fullest extent possible – and that, by extension, everything we do or make is naturally a combination of form and function, of usefulness and artfulness. Comenius, reflecting the *Zeitgeist* of his time, formed an entire educational theory on this fact, and Ritschel eagerly jumped on the bandwagon.

The Hexham Abbey Bible, in this context, was a natural attempt to put theory into practice, that is, to make the biblical text come alive through a series

of vivid and captivating engravings – a process not so far removed in their impact from the visual world of today. The open question, then as now, is whether the combination of pictures and text is appropriate to the Bible. (Our world – everywhere we look – is filled with images in conjunction with texts, not only in books and in advertisements, but especially in film. The combination is so captivating, so beguiling, that we almost immediately get lost in the stories they tell, and we forget, for the moment or the hour, that we are in a world other than our own.)

Because we today are so completely immersed in a symbiotic world of text and pictures, it is hard to imagine any other. But Comenius and Ritschel were not in our world. As Professor De Mambro Santos argued in his essay, Comenius believed that his educational method was valid for *any subject*, including religion and faith. The Hexham Abbey Bible confirms that Ritschel thought the same. But if Ritschel believed that pictures could be added to Bibles, he held back on doing anything (so far as we know) until it was politically right to do so. Although the Hexham Abbey Bible never saw the light of day, other trailblazers were in the batter's box, so to speak, behind Ritschel, to either prove Comenius correct or to prove him wrong – that is, in regard to the Bible.

I am a child of the Enlightenment, and because of that, I'm naturally inclined to the notion that the Bible can be, and should be, approached and interpreted like any other book, without presuming any special status for it. The Bible may, of course, have a special status – because of what it says and how I appropriate that into my life – but that has nothing to do with the proposal that it could be enhanced by pictures or drawings that depict Biblical scenes. Every book, whether of history, or of fishing, or of science, or of religion, must be judged according to whether the pictures it contains, add or detract to the information or impact of the book itself.

But, not anything goes! Different pictures have different effects. So at a minimum, we need to be careful which pictures, among many, might be used to enhance the Bible's impact upon a reader, but especially a young reader. Since the biblical writers did not produce the engravings that are now side-by-

side the text, we need to pay attention to how they *function* in regard to the texts themselves.

I, and obviously Ritschel before me, have no objection, in principle, to putting an artful touch to the biblical text. Christians have been doing that forever. It is hard *not* to do it! When a Bible is being written, or published, there is invariably an artful component to it. It can be in color, or in many colors. It can be capitalized or not. It can be adorned with fancy initials, or with historiated capitals, or very lavishly illuminated with detailed scenes in brilliant silver and gold. It can be formed in neat columns or in justified columns. But invariably, it will be artful to some extent. So let's be clear: being artful is, in itself, no impediment to a well-functioning Bible.

When Ritschel added his engravings to a New Testament, he was following Comenius' method to enhance readers' comprehension. The subject matter to be learned, let me emphasize, was primarily in the text, not in the engravings, though there was of course a symbiotic back-and-forth between them. For Comenius, as also for Ritschel, pictures served to enhance the text, not the other way around. So, ironically, I'm going to put Ritschel's experiment to the test, to see how his engravings – the three that I already picked out – function in regard to their respective New Testament texts or stories.

Now, I need to alert you – so that you are clear about what I am up to – that we are now entering the realm of Theological interpretation, or Hermeneutics, as scholars say. There are many ways to interpret a biblical text: some good, some very good, and a great many others, very bad. I'd like to keep things simple, as much as possible, so I'll be as direct as I can and as uncomplicated as I can.

As almost any biblical scholar will attest, it is surely true in any interpretation: that it is not so much what you read, or what you see, but how you read it, and how you see it, that gives shape and substance to an interpretation. In general, one's religious frame of reference – or one's confessional identity – provides the interpretative lens through which one reads or sees. In other words, there is a prior "horizon of meaning" – from which no one can escape – that skews everything we apprehend and everything we comprehend. So the clearer we are about our own

horizons, or frames of reference, the more manageable and respectful we can be, not only about the interpretations of others, but also about our own.

A peculiar feature of the Gospel stories is that they were all written, without exception, *after* Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead. These are not stories, then, about “days in the life of Jesus.” Rather, they are stories being told in order to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews; and that, through him, God is fulfilling his promises to Israel. Jesus’ ministry was therefore understood, retrospectively, *after* Easter, as God’s way of kick-starting the kingdom of God.

In any interpretation of a biblical text, there is one question that must, eventually, be asked. A lot can be gleaned from a text without asking this question, but without it, everything else just doesn’t matter. So, after reading the text, and after gleaning some sense of the context of the text, we need to ask: “*What is God doing here?*” Remember, this is now a theological investigation. I’m not asking about the moral of the story, or how the story came to be known. Nor am I asking everyone what their “opinion” of the story is, as if a consensus opinion must be the correct one. Rather, the God-question I’m asking cuts through the fanfare of a lot of secondary questions, and brings us face-to-face with the reality of God among us, or at least what the writer intended that to be.

We noted earlier that Ritschel placed his pictures *before* the biblical text. This means that the reader will look upon the engraving, and ponder its significance, and gather information from it, *before* getting to the text itself. Which means that the picture now serves – functionally – as *the first interpreter* of the text. (Now consider the reverse, that the picture is placed *after* the text, or between the text. In this instance, the reader may have a chance to read the text, or at least part of the text, before the picture is looked at. Now the text either interprets the picture, or there is a give-and-take between the picture and the text.) The mere placement of the engraving, then, in relation to the text, makes a great deal of difference – but especially if the story, the whole story, is as yet unknown.

Now let’s take another look at my first example, from the Hexham Abbey Bible. We want to see how

the picture functions in relation to the biblical text, how it informs our interpretation of the text, and whether it adds or detracts from the text.

In the New Testament story, from the Gospel according to John, chapter 2, Jesus and his disciples, and his mother, Mary, are invited to a wedding. And during the festivities, Mary notices that the wine has run out, so she tells Jesus to do something about it. Jesus initially demurs, then tells a servant to fill some very large jars with water (used for ritual purifications), and then take a cup of it to the chief steward. Miraculously, but unknown to anyone except the servant, the water has turned to wine, leaving everyone to marvel about how delicious the wine is, and how super-abundant it is. The text concludes by stating that this was a “sign” by which Jesus revealed his “glory”.

The engraving doesn’t show it, but the text begins with the phrase, “On the third day, there was a wedding” (2:1). The alert reader is immediately reminded that Jesus was raised from the dead “on the third day” – so perhaps this wedding is more than an occasion for Jesus to do a miracle. Or perhaps “on the third day” is merely a Hebrew idiom for saying “after a few days.” But since short stories, like engravings, say nothing extraneous, we would be wise to remain alert. Should we be on the lookout for a mere miracle, or for something far richer and mind-blowing?

As noted earlier, the engraving offers few clues for us to notice anything other than that Jesus was at a party, and joining in the festivities by directing a servant to pour out some water. (It is entirely possible, from the picture alone, that Jesus preferred water over wine, and that we should draw a moral conclusion on that basis.) At any rate, the engraving does not offer an answer to the God-question, “What is God doing here?”

But if we had read the prior chapter (there’s no time to unpack that here), we might have caught on that Jesus is somehow the place where the God of Israel has come to “dwell” (1:14) among his people. If that can be the starting place (or textual context) from which to understand what Jesus was up to, we might be open to see what the wedding guests failed to see. Was it intentional, moreover, that when Jesus turned the water into wine, he did not tell anyone

what he had done? So perhaps the engraving got it right after all, that there was nothing out of the ordinary going on, at least that anyone noticed.

But if, going by the story in the text, we were to entertain the astonishing idea that the God of Israel was up to something outrageously new, what might that be? Anyone familiar with the expectations and symbolic traditions of Israel, through her scriptures, would know that God is often spoken of as the Husband of Israel (Is. 54:5-8) – and that Jesus, by extension, is the Bridegroom of the Church (Jn. 3:29). From that perspective, Jesus is manifesting his “glory” (a God-term) by showing that the wedding party – rather than Jesus and his disciples – are the real guests at a wedding feast at which he is their host, providing a “better” and more “abundant” wine by which to live; and therefore they are invited, by the God of Israel, to witness the beginning of their redemption!

I don’t think that one can honestly look at the engraving and see all that. But if one had read the story *first* – through the lens of the history of Israel, together with the crucifixion and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah-king – and *then* looked at the engraving, and saw that no one was in the least concerned about Jesus, one might find oneself saddened by the realization that the Kingdom of God was arriving, and no one noticed.

Now to my second example, the one I have dubbed, frighteningly dramatic. (The engraving is titled “Miracle of Christ in the Sea” and cites Matthew, Ch. 4 – but the story in Matthew is not until Ch. 8. But the story is also told in Mark, Ch. 4, which I take as the correct citation). Jesus had spent the day, along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, preaching to the crowds about the kingdom of God. And in the evening, he instructed his disciples to accompany him, in a boat, to the other side. A great storm arose, which started to fill the boat with water. Jesus was asleep, so the disciples, being afraid, woke him up. Jesus then “rebuked” the wind and the sea. The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And Jesus said to his disciples, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” And the disciples were filled with awe, and wondered who this was, that even the wind and the sea obey him.

As a theologian, the most interesting thing about the engraving is the contrast between the fear of the sailors, fighting for their lives, and the calm of Jesus, asleep in the stern. But it is hard not to be beguiled by the sheer magnificence and fury of the storm, which might lead one to imagine that Jesus’ miracle of stilling the storm is the whole point of the story (as its title says). A closer look at the text, however, offers hints and allusions to something much more magnificent than the stilling of a storm.

The story in Mark begins, as tellingly as the wedding story did, with the phrase “On that day.” Mark could have begun with the next phrase, “When evening had come” – but he makes a point of saying “On that day.” Which day is that? Again, as in John, a reader in tune with the Hebrew prophets would pick up on the phrase as a way of referring to “the Day of YHWH” or “the Day of the Lord.” It is a signal to the reader that God has finally come to his people, either to rescue them or to destroy them. It’s a foreboding phrase!

Apart from the obvious contrast between Jesus and his disciples, the text says that Jesus “rebuked” the wind and the storm. That word “rebuked” is telling us something, not so much about a miracle, but about Jesus himself. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, the word is most often used by *God* to “rebuke” the wind or the sea (Is 50:2; Zech 3:2; Ps 104:7), as well as powerful persons. To an alert reader, the allusion attached to the word “rebuked” will be picked up, and provide an answer to the disciples’ question, “Who, then, is this, that even wind and sea obey him?” And just in case the allusion is not picked up, just a few verses later, a man about to be healed screams at Jesus: “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the God Most High?” (Mk 5:7). In other words, when Jesus is present, God himself is present – which for a Jew was very good news!

In Harmen Muller’s engraving, the storm is every bit as worrisome as the text says, and Jesus is asleep in the stern. That’s it. That’s all we get! Well, almost. Jesus does have that nimbus around his head. If we were being generous, we might say that the picture was merely setting the stage, as it were, enticing us to read on. But if that function was not in Comenius’ playbook, was it in Ritschel’s? Perhaps what we have

is a nuance to Comenius' method, from merely fostering information to enticing further reading. I can live with that! Still, the most important part of the story is left out.

In my last example, Jesus is crucified among two others. There is no nimbus this time, just a crown of thorns, and a title (*titulus*) above his head identifying him as King of the Jews. The contrast between this scene and every other scene, to this point, could not be greater. Before, Jesus was in total control. Now, as it appears to all the world, he is under the thumb of the ruling authorities, and death is closing in. He is finished.

Crucifixion then, by itself, does not tell us what, if anything, God is doing there. It is only that small figure in the grotto that gives us pause. You can hardly make it out, but we can see that it is Peter, the first among the disciples. You can tell by the extra-large key in front of him, which is a symbol for the Church – and for the papacy. This makes the grotto scene a projection of the Church's faith, rather than depicting anything realistic at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. That complicates things considerably, and gets in the way of the original incongruity, or paradox, of a crucified Messiah-king.

If the engraving of Jesus' crucifixion is to be understood in biblical terms, it will be in relation to the history Israel's kings. Israel had always known, as we can read in her coronation Psalms, that even when she insisted on having a king like all other kings (see 1 Sam 8), YHWH her God is, and always was, her true and rightful king. From this point of view, God was present in Jesus' crucifixion, precisely as Israel's king.

I will not explore this last example any further, except to note that the story of Jesus' passion, or rather the one story told in different ways among four different Gospels, would not have been told at all were it not for the story or stories of Jesus' resurrection. That is the one story that gives substance and meaning to every other story, including Jesus' crucifixion. Yet it is just that story, *the Easter story*, that must be read, or heard, *prior* to a full appreciation of any picture, or a full interpretation of any text, in the Hexham Abbey Bible. Because of this, every engraving in the Hexham Abbey Bible is limited in its power to interpret itself according to the Gospel.

5. Conclusions

I'll end this essay with a few concluding remarks. It has taken 350 years for George Ritschel's experiment in religious education, the Hexham Abbey Bible, to see the light of day. Although it might have been created in order to smooth the way for his continued employment at Hexham Abbey, the Bible as we now have it stands on its own, even if no longer on its own terms.

True – a further investigation into the Hexham Abbey Bible would analyze what Ritschel's selection of images tells us about his own theological leanings, or rather the persuasions he wished to assert. It would analyze not only the engravings Ritschel includes, but the ones he likely chose to leave out, such as engraving #21 within the Hexham Abbey Bible, at the end of John, which depicts Christ in Limbo (#20 and #22 are present, side by side), or the magnificent Raphael-like engraving of Jesus' transfiguration that is included in Gerard de Jode's monumental *Thesaurus Novi Testamenti* (1585) of which only nine complete copies remain – a sumptuous picture-book of the Bible, without any biblical text, from which many of the Hexham Abbey Bible engravings originate. And why, because of this, doesn't the Hexham Abbey Bible include any post-resurrection appearances, or the Ascension, or Last Judgment? Are we to suspect that Ritschel considered these scenes to be non-historical?

Nor ought we to have ignored the more peculiar engravings, like the one that includes the Greek gods Bacchus and Venus among the partiers at a great feast; or the one that hails the "Spirit of Science" (*Spiritus Scientiae*) as one of the "Seven Gifts of the Spirit". Such a further investigation could have taken into account the religious and moral sensibilities embedded in the engravings themselves, as these are set alongside, or against, the biblical text – either to educate or to correct the reader.

These points notwithstanding, the Hexham Abbey Bible proves Ritschel's patron and mentor wrong, in that pictures or other visual aids are appropriate educational aids to add alongside texts, *regardless of subject matter*. As we have seen – in the limited scope of just three examples – pictures that are presented

before a biblical text tend to dominate and limit the interpretation of the text. The text, then, becomes secondary to the picture.

Furthermore, as pictures become more and more a permanent fixture in a Bible, any Bible, they have the unforeseen function of freezing, *for all time*, the interpretation that is already imbedded in the picture – impoverished though it may be – against any other interpretation that may result from reading the text in the context of Israel’s history, and in view of ongoing scholarly investigations.

This result is only slightly mitigated if Ritschel had instead placed the engravings *after* their respective texts instead of *before* them. In that case, it would be obvious that the pictures have left out of “their story” the very things that make their New Testament counterparts “Good News.” To be generous to Ritschel, one might say that insofar as one sees the engravings with the eyes of faith, one is enticed to read more of the text; but insofar as one sees the engravings without the eyes of faith (or fails to read at all), one sees only what one expects to see, that is, nothing out of the ordinary. From this perspective, Ritschel’s placement of the engravings certainly entice (or seduce) the reader to continue reading, if for no other reason than to be delighted (or beguiled) by each successive engraving.

To Ritschel’s credit, he created 350 years ago what would have been, and was, mass produced just a few decades later – a process that has not abated, to this day. In this regard, he was among the vanguard of a creative impulse that, from the beginnings of human society, combined non-verbal communications with verbal or textual ones. As technology advances, so does our ability to enhance communication, or to subvert it.

So then, is the Hexham Abbey Bible a work of “Holy Beauty” or an “Unholy Marriage”? I say: Viewer beware!

On a personal note, I am humbled that such a gift as the Hexham Abbey Bible has fallen into my hands, and that there have been so many people willing to give of their time and considerable skills to present it to the world, in style. Special thanks is due to the tireless efforts of Professor Ricardo De Mambro Santos. As these engravings, and others like them, are his “friends,” I can now count him as my “friend.”

The Hexham Abbey Bible is, as far as I know, unique among all English Bibles. What will become of it? It needs a suitable home, hopefully a public one – one that will offer the Hexham Abbey Bible to scholars for continued study, and to the general public for the admiration it surely deserves.

The Concept of Romanism in Northern Art.

An Analysis of Its Critical Implications

Olivia Barry

As an art phenomenon, the Italian Renaissance is characterized by the rebirth of antiquity and an increased interest in the study of the human body and the human experience within carefully planned visual narratives. This new approach started in Florence and moved eventually to Rome in the early 1500s for what has come to be known in the History of Art as the “High Renaissance,” recognized primarily by the attention toward works by Michelangelo and Raphael.

From this blossoming aesthetic in Italy came an interest in Humanistic themes in Northern Europe as well. In modern scholarship, this cultural phenomenon was often referred to as “Romanism,” a term defined as the style that resulted from Northern artists coming to Rome to study the work of Italian masters. In their studies, these artists focused primarily on the work of Raphael and Michelangelo, as well as the culture, ideology, and aesthetic surrounding monuments and traditions from antiquity. As a result of this approach, the Italian Renaissance artistic paradigms migrated North to places like Flanders and the Netherlands. Ilja M. Veldman describes how

Romanism found expression, above all, in religious or mythological figure pieces, in which the undraped, anatomically correct depiction of the human body, preferably in a complicated pose, was a central element [...] Furthermore, the complexity of the compositions and an increased interest in new and intricate themes often revealed the Romanist’s knowledge of humanism.¹

Fascination with the anatomy of the human body, the rebirth of antiquity through the study of ancient styles and iconographies, often combined with Christian elements, and humanistic culture inspired these artists, who brought what they learned in Italy back to the North.

Frequently, the term Romanism has been deemed problematic and has therefore appeared less in scholarship. This is due to an increased study of Northern art and a greater appreciation for the individuality of local artists. The very term “Romanist” suggest the supremacy of the Italian influence on Netherlandish artists, undermining the other influences and individualities associated with Northern art in the Renaissance era. In this essay I will discuss two key problems in the Romanism category, with consideration to several Northern artists who have been deemed “Romanists.” The first problem is the assumption of the superiority of Roman antiquity. As I will demonstrate, many “Romanists” were in fact inspired by the history of their own region as much as by Ancient Rome. A second problem is the mass grouping of “Romanists” who went to Italy to study. Though they were to a certain extent inspired by Italian art and culture, their reactions to these paradigms vary drastically, primarily because of the variation of artists that were studied and selected as sources of inspiration. Veldman addresses this problem when she claims that “a more profound study of the work of individual artists has led to more attention being given to their specific characteristics, while the diversity of their responses to Italian art has come to be more fully appreciated.”² Moreover, these issues reveal the prejudices conveyed by the concept

of Romanism and call for a more open analysis of the inspirations and origins of Northern artists.

Romanism as a blanket term implies the supremacy of Italian art and its influence on Northern artists while it ignores the influence of Northern aesthetics and motifs. Many “Romanist” artists actively considered Northern history and styles in their art. For Lambert Lombard, for instance, “[t]he reconstruction of ancient art remained an overarching preoccupation throughout [...] [his] career.”³

Lambert Lombard, a highly regarded artist and theoretician in sixteenth-century Flanders – was concerned with ideas of Virtue, Humanism, and “Disegno – a philosophical and technical foundation that unified the arts and united theory and practice,”⁴ and other conceptual as well as stylistic issues that separated him from other Netherlandish or Flemish artists who still considered art primarily as manual labor rather than an aesthetic and intellectually-driven procedure. Lombard was convinced that “a work of art should demonstrate its creator’s vast knowledge and, in turn, prove his reputation as a *pictor doctus*.”⁵

These ideas clearly have a resonance with Renaissance Humanism. Lombard’s ideas and art, however, did not take inspiration solely from the Italian tradition. In fact, “Lombard’s ‘antique’ syntax was informed by his encounter with Italy, but...it was also firmly rooted in the rediscovery of his Netherlandish past.”⁶ To understand Lombard’s art, theory, and cultural background, consideration of his encounter with Northern antiquity is just as important as his fascination with Italian history and aesthetic.

Lombard’s attraction to the history of his own region is embodied in his studies dedicated to the mythological character Hercules. Lombard was drawn to Hercules in part because of his fascination with the virtue and morality embodied by the ancient figure. Hercules has a long tradition of symbolizing endurance and ideal virtue with his twelve labors. Dutch humanist Erasmus “held the figure of Hercules in high regard and considered his labors to be spiritually enriching, [and] was drawn to the subject of Hercules Gallicus for its celebration of eloquence as an ancient virtue.”⁷ Furthermore, “The people of Gaul believed Hercules to be the very em-

bodiment of eloquence who could achieve anything through his powers of persuasion.”⁸

In addition to the mythology behind Hercules, Lombard was also drawn by the hero’s connections with his own region’s ancient history. While discussing Lombard’s study of Hercules, Wouk references a folio by Lombard – belonging to the Album d’Arenberg and now at the Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins de la Ville de Liège – in which the artist has drawn Hercules in several different poses, noting that “[i]n the lower register of this three tiered sheet [...] [he] drew the figure of Hercules based on an ekphrasis of a picture that Lucian claimed to have seen when he visited Gaul around ad 150. As Lucian recounts in his *Heracles*, the inhabitants of Gaul called the hero Ogmios and portrayed him as an old man with a club in his right hand, bow in his left hand and quiver at his side.”⁹

Hercules is a figure most often associated with ancient Greek and Roman mythology. However, Lucian’s recounts of the hero demonstrate that the Ancient people of Gaul also venerated him and represented him in various arts. Lombard’s selection of a hero associated with Gaul and the North demonstrates the artist’s desire to study his own past, not merely copy the ideologies and history of Italy. Wouk makes Lombard’s fascination with the association between Hercules and Gaul even more compelling with his assurance that “Lombard was undoubtedly aware of the historic connection between Hercules and his own ancestors. The Roman historian Tacitus recounts that Hercules’s labors brought him to Germania Inferior, the province on the left bank of the Rhine that was split off from Gallia Belgica in the first century ad, and encompassed Lombard’s native Liege and surrounding parts of modern-day Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany.”¹⁰

The very acts that made Lombard so interested in Hercules, namely his labors, symbols of his virtue and endurance, took place in the artist’s own region, according to his account. Lombard’s choice to depict the Hercules Gallicus in his study of the Herculean anatomy shows therefore that he was indeed studying the antiquity of his own region and not solely Roman antiquity. Consequently, labeling this artist

simply a “Romanist” would discard entire facets of his career and his interests.

In addition to studying the history and the trends of Humanism in the North, “Romanist” artists distinguished themselves by reacting differently to the various techniques, styles, and models that were being explored in Italy. Though they sought to learn from Italian modes of representation, their own backgrounds, interests, and personalities produced a myriad of work that in many cases differed from each other quite drastically. Michiaki Koshikawa reflects this point in connection to Maarten van Heemskerck. On the front side of a sheet by Heemskerck is a sketch of the Belvedere sculpture court in the Vatican done in pen and brown ink – now belonging to the British Museum in London – it is possible to identify relevant ancient pieces such as the Laocoon, the sarcophagus of M. Sulpicius, and the *La Zitella* statue. This drawing, considered the first of the sculpture court, was attributed to Heemskerck in 1987, an attribution that has stood strong since its identification.¹¹

In another sketch that appears on the back of the sheet, there is a standing male nude, supposedly a study of a Bacchus figure made by Baccio Bandinelli. Koshikawa observes that “the formal coincidence is precise. The two figures are exactly the same size, which means that the British Museum figure drawing is not a normal copy but one made by direct tracing. When we compare the hatching of both sheets, it becomes clear that the draughtsman not only copied the outlines of the figure, but also closely followed the system of shading used in the model, although the hatching lines are slightly less thick in the British Museum version.”¹²

Though the nude youth was not initially attributed to Heemskerck, unlike the study of the sculpture court, Koshikawa observes that if

the *View of the Belvedere sculpture court* on the recto of the British Museum sheet was drawn by Maarten van Heemskerck in 1532–33, and if the male nude on the verso is related to the activity of the Bandinelli academy in the Belvedere shortly before, this seems to justify the fascinating hypothesis that Heemskerck actu-

ally visited Bandinelli’s studio soon after his arrival in Rome, and there copied the drawing now in the V. & A. Using the other side of the same sheet, he then sketched the celebrated antique statues in the court yard outside.¹³

On this page we therefore have a documentation of two works by Heemskerck within a short time of each other, demonstrating his different interests and focuses of study. The relationship between the sculpture court drawing and the male nude study and the context in which Heemskerck made the two drawings demonstrates how the sheet represents Maarten van Heemskerck’s interests, individuality, and his motivations for coming to Rome. The male nude, a close study of the specific method used by Bandinelli, varying so little from its original, reflects Heemskerck’s desire to learn the technical secrets of the Italian artists, just as the other Romanists did.

Given that this sketch is a direct tracing of a figure, little outright personality or innovation can be gleaned from Heemskerck’s side, other than the fact that he wanted to learn the sketching style of Bandinelli and, as Koshikawa mentioned, the slightly thinner hatching style, perhaps a result of Heemskerck’s hand or instrument. In contrast, while the nude is a direct study, the sketch of the sculpture court is a reflection of the Northern artist’s creative agenda. One can imagine Heemskerck walking through different rooms of the Vatican, all containing various fruit for inspiration, but the fact that he chose to stop not only at the sculpture garden, but at this particular angle and include precisely these works in the sketch we examine today reflects his particular interest and inspiration at a precise moment in time.

Heemskerck’s choice demonstrates his profound interest specifically for ancient sculpture and culture, in addition to the interests in anatomy addressed in the nude sketch. The combination of these two culturally contrasting sketches on the same paper is quite symbolic, for as Koshikawa notes, the “recto and the verso of the British Museum sheet therefore reveal two different aspects of the artist’s interests upon his arrival in Rome: on the one hand an open view of a courtyard with classical remains evoking the glory of the ancient world, and on the other an academic

study made for the purpose of assimilating the latest Italian style.”¹⁴ The combination of these two models points to the very problem of the blanket term Romanism: while all of the Romanists sought to study and understand the Italian Renaissance style, their source of inspiration and their means of manipulating the Italian style and culture was the product of their own desires and individualities as artists.

The individuality of the so-called Romanists and their reactions to Italian art can be seen in a myriad of works both by Heemskerck and by Michiel Coxcie, particularly through the comparison of these two artists’ works and inspirations. Coxcie “is considered one of the principal interpreters of the art of Raphael in sixteenth-century Flemish painting.”¹⁵ Scholars Gnann and Laurenza have examined Coxcie’s avid repetition of Raphael while he was in Rome and stressed, in particular, that “the entire series of *Psyche* engravings belong[ing] to the first phase of Coxcie’s Roman sojourn in about 1532–34 – a phase dominated by an intense study of Raphael and his followers. The fruitful results of this can be seen in the frescoes Coxcie executed in the chapel of St. Barbara in S. Maria dell’Anima.”¹⁶ Heemskerck has been described as a follower of Michelangelo and a student of classical sculpture. Jefferson C. Harrison, however, argues that “the decisive influence on Heemskerck’s mature style came from none of these sources. The Italian aesthetic that would ultimately transform his art [...] had far less to do with previous High Renaissance or mannerist modes than with the most contemporary of Roman stylistic developments: the new High Maniera aesthetic.”¹⁷ Though still admitting that much of Heemskerck’s Italian style was inspired by models like Michelangelo, Harrison observes in Heemskerck’s work the “typically ambiguous and compressive Maniera space” and the “acceleration and distortion of depth recession”¹⁸ that is characteristic of the High Maniera.

Although this essay will refrain from sorting Maarten van Heemskerck into yet another constricted category like the High Maniera, this concept – as adopted by Harrison in his study – can be nevertheless useful as a preliminary notion that describes several attributes of Heemskerck’s art and reflects the particular direction of his adaptation of the Ital-

ian style, while stressing, at the same time, just how Heemskerck’s use of Italian models is very different from Coxcie for instance. These different characteristics can be therefore taken in order to compare not only the specific styles of Heemskerck and Coxcie, but also to illustrate the diverse reactions to Italian art, culture, and working procedures expressed by different Northern masters.

Interestingly, both Heemskerck and Coxcie interpreted in an engraving the theme of the *Brazen Serpent* (ill. 1–2). Their works are highly detailed studies of male anatomy. The male nudes are shown from head to foot amongst the writhing snakes, and the muscle definition is precise and exaggerated. Both engravings display writhing, fretful chaos. However, while in Heemskerck that chaos seems to spread throughout the composition, covering every inch of the foreground and then expanding back towards the depiction of the serpent with little break in commotion, there are two arresting points in Coxcie’s engraving that draw the viewer’s eye and allow for a break in the fretting. One of these points is situated in the very foreground of the composition in the left corner, where a man sits nearly parallel to the frame. His right leg is stretched out in front of him and his left leg is folded over it. His arms encircle the folded leg and he looks to the sky in a cry of agony. The other point is directly to the right of the actual representation of the serpent, where a man kneels and reaches toward the snake in plea. This man is probably Moses, for he is fully clothed and seems to be asking God for help, as it is known that Moses did in the biblical narrative. These two elements, the man crying in pain in the foreground and the man kneeling before the serpent further back create a dramatic and emotional pause. Around them, the snakes reek havoc on the dying and agonized men.

Such a pause is not as present in Heemskerck’s piece, in which the bodies appear to be in motion throughout the scene, except perhaps for the standing figure to the right of the engraving, whose pose is very graceful and classical, as a snake slithers up his body. Another difference between the two engravings – based on a preliminary formal analysis – is that Heemskerck’s serpent and the way that it twists around the pole is quite dramatic and monumental,

even though it is far in the background, while Coxcie's serpent simply lays scrappy and lifeless.

Though the different styles and motives of these two "Romanist" artists are apparent even in a quick visual comparison, Harrison's observation of a typical "High Maniera" style in Heemskerck in contrast to Michiel Coxcie's faithful emulation of Raphael further clarifies how the visual codes applied by these two artists branched away from the Italian aesthetic in different directions. In Heemskerck's piece, Harrison notes in fact "a preference for complex, multidirectional figurative movements and virtuoso foreshortenings, for complicated contrapposti and the figura serpentinatai."¹⁹

This is an evident difference between Coxcie and Heemskerck's depictions. While Coxcie's figures are, for the most part, parallel and perpendicular to the picture plane, Heemskerck's twist and writhe in a myriad of different angles and directions. For example, the two central figures of each engraving are the man kneeling and pulling the snake from his throat in Heemskerck, and the man whose muscled back is turned toward us in Coxcie. A stylistically-centered analysis of these two figures demonstrates that Heemskerck had fashioned the limbs of his characters so that they stick out at multiple angles, while Coxcie's figure, with the exception of the slightly bent knee, appears almost perfectly straight up and down and perpendicular to the ground.

Another example of this difference is the corresponding figures that lie in the very foreground of the engravings. In Heemskerck's composition a woman accompanied by a child, and in Coxcie's print a man whose arm has been thrown up to cover his face. The majority of Coxcie's figures is perfectly parallel to the frame of the picture, while Heemskerck's is foreshortened and moves towards the back of the engraving.

Harrison also observes in Heemskerck "a directing of attention away from the principal figures or action. The main subject is often obscured and difficult to locate in a crowd of equally emphasized and uniformly lighted secondary figures."²⁰ In Coxcie's *Brazen Serpent*, the actual serpent is much closer to the foreground than Heemskerck's, and is highlighted by the praying man beneath it. Heemskerck's ser-

pent is far in the distance and overshadowed by the writhing male bodies.

This particular compositional method – that places the main subject of the work off center – reveals a significant difference between Coxcie's and Heemskerck's style, which becomes even more evident in the comparison of two paintings by these artists: Coxcie's fresco in Santa Maria dell'Anima in Rome, depicting *The Torture of Saint Barbara with Torches* and Heemskerck's oil on canvas representing *Mars and Venus trapped by Vulcan*, now at the Pavlovsk Palace-Museum.

In Coxcie's fresco, the most important subject of the piece is represented in the center of the image and takes up nearly the entire space of the pictorial surface: St. Barbara hangs by her wrists from a wooden pole while the men around her ready the torches for her torture. There is no ambiguity surrounding the central subject of the work, for she is framed at the very center of the spectator's vision. She is the primary focus of the entire work.

The same remark cannot be made in regard to Heemskerck's painting of Mars, Venus, and Vulcan. The main scene takes up a very small part of the painting. In the very lower left corner, Mars embraces Venus while Vulcan, with his back to us, entraps them with a net. The three "central" figures are surrounded by other mythological figures including "a one-eyed Cyclops (Vulcan's assistant), Neptune with a trident and Hercules clad in a lion's skin."²¹ In addition to the figures surrounding this triad, identifiable "further to the right [...] [are] a vine-wreathed Bacchus with Ariadne, and Pluto carrying a trident hand in hand with Proserpine [...] Jupiter and Juno appear in the clouds while on the left, above the couch, the flying Mercury blows a caduceus-like bugle entwined by serpents and lifting the curtain of the alcove [...] a winged Victory flies swiftly in with flowers for the 'victorious' Vulcan [...] and a semi-recumbent, blindfolded Cupid, his bows and arrows scattered on the ground along with Vulcan's hammer and pieces of armour."²²

Any of these figures could be described as the subject of the painting for they are given just as much importance, if not more in the case of Bacchus and Ariadne who are more central and visible, as the triad



Ill. 1 – Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Brazen Serpent*, ca. 1540, engraving, Amsterdam, Private collection



Ill. 2 – Michiel Coxcie, *The Brazen Serpent*, ca. 1533–34, engraving, Antwerp, Private collection

in the corner for whom the painting is named. These differences reflect not only a variety of styles between Coxcie and Heemskerck, but also that the “Romanists” had a myriad of inspirations and styles to choose from, making it so that none of them responded to the Italian style in exactly the same way.

The migration of Italian Renaissance forms and Humanist themes to the Northern lands of Europe is an extremely important event in 16th-century art. The problems raised by the blanket term “Romanism,” however, reveal that in this field, it is important not to forget the individuality of the artists and the

influences that their own regions had on the development of their styles. Though both considered Romanists, Heemskerck and Coxcie turned out to be quite different culturally and stylistically, and Lambert Lombard’s fascination with the Renaissance and antiquity had just as much to do with his own heritage as with Rome. It is easy to develop prejudices in the study of history, therefore accepted terminology, values, and ideas must constantly be reassessed and questioned in order to rethink those stereotypes for a more nuanced and complex reading of art, artists, and history.

Notes

1. Ilja M. Veldman, “Romanism,” in *Grove Art Online-Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed October 27, 2017.
2. Veldman, “Romanism.”
3. Edward H. Wouk, “Reclaiming the Antiquities of Gaul: Lambert Lombard and the History of Northern Art,” in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 2006, Vol. 36, pp. 35–65.
4. Ibidem, p. 36.
5. Ibidem, p. 35.
6. Ibidem, p. 44.
7. Ibidem, p. 46.
8. Wouk, “Reclaiming the Antiquities of Gaul,” p. 45.
9. Ibidem.
10. Ibidem, p. 48.
11. Michiaki Koshikawa, “A Drawing by Maarten Van Heemskerck after Baccio Bandinelli,” in *The Burlington Magazine* 1005, Vol. 147, pp. 176–79.
12. Koshikawa, “A Drawing by Maarten van Heemskerck,” p. 176.

13. Ibidem, p. 178.
14. Koshikawa, “A Drawing by Maarten van Heemskerck,” p. 179.
15. Achim Gnann and Domenico Laurenza, “Raphael’s Influence on Michiel Coxcie: Two New Drawings and a Painting,” in *Master Drawings* 1996, Vol. 34, pp. 293–302.
16. Gnann, “Raphael’s Influence on Michiel Coxcie,” p. 293.
17. Harrison, Jefferson C. Harrison, “The Brazen Serpent by Maarten Van Heemskerck: Aspects of Its Style and Meaning,” in *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 1990, Vol. 49, pp. 17–29.
18. Ibidem, p. 22.
19. Harrison, “The Brazen Serpent by Maarten van Heemskerck,” p. 21.
20. Ibidem.
21. Nina Stadnichuk, “An Unknown ‘Mars and Venus’ by Maarten Van Heemskerck,” in *The Burlington Magazine* 1996, Vol. 138, pp. 182–85.
22. Ibidem, p. 182.

The Parable of Ten Virgins.

An Interpretation Based on Coornhert's Concept of Perfectionism

Virginia Van Dine

“Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:1-13). This final line of the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* forewarns readers to prepare themselves for the Last Judgement. Further still, the parable promotes a didactic message which is to learn, follow, and practice the moral lessons expressed through biblical parables. The emphasis on understanding biblical law and implementing the virtues conveyed in its narratives onto one's own actions, suggests the possibility of conducting a Christian life in accordance with religious and moral prescriptions. This concept of refraining from committing sin is very much in line with Dutch Neostoic philosopher and artist Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert's (1522-90) theory of “perfectionism.”¹

It was Coornhert's strong belief that through self-knowledge, study of the Bible, and complete submission to God, anyone could live a sinless, perfect life.² While Coornhert did not design any of the engravings in Hexham Abbey Bible, his writings certainly influenced the representation of parables in some of the works inserted within this unique volume. Specifically, Coornhert's encouragement of strict biblical study and knowledge of how to conduct oneself morally, impacted the visual narrative composed in a print published by Gerard de Jode (1509-1591), representing the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (Catalog 29).³

The message of the scene depicted in this print is an allegorical and moralizing one. Parables act as didactic stories with symbolic overarching themes, which aim to guide the reader to salvation, according to a Christian reading of these allegorical tales. Because of their narrative and instructive

nature, biblical parables made an excellent subject for accompanying prints. The *Parable of the Ten Virgins* tells a story of ten unmarried women who go out to meet the bridegroom. The reader is asked to imagine that reaching the Kingdom of Heaven resembles somehow the journey of maidens going to meet the bridegroom to attend a wedding banquet. They all bring lamps to light their way but five are “foolish” and ill-prepared, forgetting to bring extra oil. The other five virgins, thoughtful in their preparations, have enough oil to last through the night. The forgetful five must go out to find oil, and in their absence the bridegroom arrives, guiding the five wise virgins to the wedding banquet. This parable acts as a moral warning to be prepared for the Last Judgment, clearly demonstrating how to act and how *not* to act. The parable warns that if one does not prepare for this final moment, he or she will be blocked from entry into heaven as the five virgins were cast out in the dark from the wedding banquet.

The parable itself aligns with Coornhert's key theory of how to behave morally, avoid sin, and prepare oneself for heaven. However, the visual details that the print published by de Jode incorporated into the composition provide added context to the parable itself and mirror some of Coornhert's most important points. What de Jode accomplished in this engraving was to visually juxtapose the wise and the foolish virgins through a comprehensive visual narrative, filled with symbolic and moral clues to further guide the reader of this episode to be prepared for the Last Judgment. Arguably, de Jode's print demonstrates the impact of Coornhert's

theory of perfectionism. Coornhert suggested that readers should consider the Scriptures as a “mirror” and that while reading about the sins committed in the Bible, “one should ask oneself whether one would make the same mistakes in a similar situation.”⁴ This challenge to notice sin in the Bible and ask oneself how one would act in that situation, is also represented in de Jode’s engraving.

The scene can be viewed as a split composition. The foolish virgins seen on the right in the foreground are disorderly, appearing drunk, raucous, and scantily dressed. In contrast, the virgins on the left are dressed in modest layers befitting young unmarried women as they diligently refill their oil lamps. The parable programmatically differentiates between the correct and incorrect models to follow in this story, but the print provides instruction that moves beyond text. By placing the women side-by-side in the composition, de Jode enhanced the parable’s efficacy and illustrated behavior to avoid, actions to embody, and how to best understand the lesson told in the Bible. Coornhert’s own practice of engraving allegorical biblical scenes and his belief that sin could be diminished through study of the Bible and pursuit of moral knowledge,⁵ was likely an influence on many of the prints inserted in the Hexham Abbey Bible, including de Jode’s engraving.

Enhancing the pedagogical goals of the visual narrative further, de Jode enriched the composition by adding symbols and depicting the progression of events narrated in the parable. The unwise virgins, representative of those who do not follow Coornhert’s and the Bible’s lessons, sit amongst an overturned lamp and hour glass, both acting as signifiers of misfortune, mortality, and the loss of time. In opposition, an hour glass stands upright before the moral and knowledgeable virgins, representative of those who heed the Bible and strive to banish sin from their lives. In the background, one can interpret these scenes as a continuation of the virgins’

stories. The women who did not bring enough oil for their lamps and missed the arriving bridegroom, are depicted wandering aimlessly with no lamps to light their way. They are locked out of the wedding banquet represented as a tower which is symbolic of heavenly dimensions. The wise virgins, however, stand in an orderly line, holding their lamps aloft as a haloed figure ushers them through a doorway. This haloed figure expands beyond the allegory of the bridegroom as it clearly demonstrates a divine figure welcoming those possessing self-knowledge and morality into the Kingdom of Heaven. The detail of this guiding, heavenly figure further exhibits the influence of Coornhert who quoted Hypocrates as a means of expressing his own theory of fully submitting to God: “Leave yourself and follow me.”⁶ The wise virgins follow the direction of God completely, just as the men and women viewing this engraving were encouraged to do.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins reflects but also expands upon the allegory from the Bible. De Jode made the symbolism of the parable more decipherable and clear to the reader of the narrative as he or she turned from text to image. What is perhaps more striking is the ethical and religious implications of this print when interpreted through the lens of Coornhert’s theory of perfectionism. The emphatic point of Coornhert’s writings was to learn from the Bible, to take notice of sinful behavior and know the virtuous way to act against the tendency to “fall”. This concept is clearly laid out in this print. De Jode makes the sinfulness of the foolish virgins obvious: they are not merely forgetful, but wanton with bare breasts, and vain with fine jewelry and elaborate hairstyles. These sinful actions are observable in direct comparison with sinless, virtuous actions. The composition, like Coornhert’s theories, works to alert people of sin, but to also reassure them that with study of the Bible and conscious rejection of sinful behavior, they too can be like the five wise virgins guided into heaven.

Notes

1. For more on Coornhert's religious theoretical writing and print making consult, Barbara Kaminska, "Looking beyond Confessional Boundaries: Discourse of Religious Tolerance in Prints by Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert and Adriaan de Weert", in *Renaissance and Reformation*, 2013, Vol. 36, pp 83-126 and Mirjam G.K. Van Veen, "'No One Born of God Commits Sin': Coornhert's Perfectionism", in *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2004, Vol. 84, pp. 338-57.

2. Van Veen, "'No One Born of God Commits Sin': Coornhert's Perfectionism", p. 338.

3. Gerard de Jode was primarily a cartographer but addi-

tionally made and designed various biblical engravings. Consult M. Felix Freshwater's "The Good Samaritan: Designed by Gerard de Jode", in *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 1971, Vol. 26, p. 438, for more on another biblical engraving credited to de Jode.

4. This translation of Coornhert's theory on perfectionism was translated by Mirjam G.K Van Keen. Coornhert originally wrote this to C. de Groot, not dated *Brieven-boeck* (WW 3, ep. 7, 91r). Van Veen, "'No One Born of God Commits Sin': Coornhert's Perfectionism", p. 346.

5. Ibidem, p. 343.

6. Coornert: "...verlaet u self ende volcht my nae" translated by Mirjam Van Keen. Van Keen, "'No One Born of God Commits Sin': Coornhert's Perfectionism", p. 348.

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