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Sequential Art in the Seventeenth Century:

An Analysis of Wenceslaus Hollar's Etchings of Genesis 12-24

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Abstract

A close analysis of an etching by seventeenth-century artist, Wenceslaus Hollar which is based on the Abraham narrative from Genesis 12-24. The etching has been created in the format of a comic strip and this paper focuses on how the combination of text and image aids readers in understanding and interpreting biblical themes and messages. Created at a time when Bibles were becoming accessible outside of a church setting, this etching served as a visual aid to interpreting ancient Scripture, and as such this paper examines the effect of presenting well-known texts in a visual medium designed to aid literacy. The focus begins with an evaluation of the factors affecting new Bible readers during the seventeenth century, also taking into account inspiration and influences upon the artist while he designed this etching series. Each panel is studied individually with reference to seventeenth-century political and social context, and alongside biblical commentaries to highlight themes and debates prevalent in society at that time. Finally, the sequence as a whole is examined, and it is argued firstly that the series is an early example of a comic strip, and secondly that this format allows the reader to reinterpret and reimagine Scripture to fit in with readers' own needs and understandings.

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I. Introduction

In the Special Collections department of Glasgow University Library is a portfolio of etchings created by Wenceslaus Hollar.[1] Plainly entitled '*250 of his etchings, mounted,*' the subjects in the collection are widely varied, ranging from portraits and costume studies to landscapes and book illustrations. It is a fine example of the diverse range of subject matter etched by an artist whose career spanned over five decades. At the very end of this portfolio, two somewhat unusual etchings are stuck into the book, almost as an afterthought. The first is a series of sixteen panels which tells the biblical story of Abraham, taken from Genesis 12-24 (Fig. 1.1). The second is in the same format, and is centred upon the story of Jacob and Joseph from Genesis 24-48 (Fig. 1.2). Each panel measures 68mm x 93mm, and the full-sheets are slightly smaller than a sheet of A3 paper. What makes these etchings unusual is that they are presented in the format of what we would recognise as a modern comic strip. The panels which frame each image are composed of a single illustration which is headed by a caption referring the viewer to a specific biblical passage which corresponds to the image. Quite often, the image itself contains lettering in the format of an annotation or speech bubble. Probably sold as a full sheet, it is probable that the etchings were then meant to be cut up and stuck into personal Bibles, as individual illustrations which illuminated their corresponding biblical narratives.[2] However kept together as a whole, the narrative can be read in sequence across all sixteen panels, and it becomes a story which progresses with each succeeding panel. This thesis will focus entirely on the *Abraham* series, with reference to the *Jacob & Joseph* series (henceforth referred to as the *Jacob* series for brevity) in Chapter Three.

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[1] Shelf index: Sp. Coll S.M. 1916, University of Glasgow Library. The volume is part of the Stirling Maxwell Collection whose guiding influence is that of text/image interaction. Other copies of the etchings which survive are also only in full-sheet format, and can be found (in various states) housed in the following places: The British Museum Library; The Hollar Collection at Prague (now in the Kinsky Palace); the Royal Library, Windsor; and the Fisher Collection, University of Toronto. This is according to R Pennington (see below, p. 3). Pennington does not include a copy of the full-sheet (State iii) housed in Glasgow University Library.

[2] R. Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Works of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607-1677*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1982, p. 3.

Fig 1.1: *The Abraham Story* (in full-sheet format) Date unknown (State iii).

Fig 1.2: *The Jacob & Joseph Story* (in full-sheet format) Date unknown (State iii).

To this end, Chapter One focuses on situating the *Abraham* narrative in political, social and artistic context. The biography of Hollar is extremely important when attempting to understand the reason behind the creation of the etching, as is the subject of Hollar's religious beliefs which themselves have gone unconfirmed. The first two sections of Chapter One aim to outline both of these topics in order to help interpret the meaning behind the etching. There are several biographies written about Hollar, all of which have their merits. In order to create a comprehensive biography, this paper makes use of three key works: a contemporary, edited version of John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* (first published in 1693), which has been edited from the original manuscript and contains an introduction by O.L. Dick, published in 1958; Richard Pennington's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Works of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607-1677* (published in 1982); and *Wenceslaus Hollar: Prints and Drawings* by Anthony Griffiths and Gabriela Kesnerova (published in 1983). While not the original primary source, this edited version of Aubrey's work contains a brief, two-page summary on Hollar. Aubrey was a contemporary of Hollar's and although not wholly reliable in his character portrayals (see Chapter One, section one for more information), it is one of the few surviving accounts of Hollar from the seventeenth century and therefore important to consider and reflect upon while building a clear picture of Hollar's life. Pennington's catalogue of works contains a concise and detailed biography which offers a detailed and knowledgeable account of Hollar's life, with particular emphasis on the artist's religious beliefs. It draws on a wide range of sources to create a comprehensive biography, including making use of Gustav Parthey's early attempts at cataloguing Hollar's works, from 1853.[3] Similarly, Griffiths & Kesnerova introduce their book with a concise account of Hollar's life which has proved especially useful in determining the social and political context surrounding Hollar. A fourth source, a transcript of a lecture by Dr. Anne Thackray for the Alexander Pathy Lecture given at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto in November 2006 has also proved especially informative and provides a good timeline for Hollar's life. Reference has been given to other sources used to build Hollar's biography, however these four have proved essential in creating a comprehensive, well-informed biography of Hollar as they stem from different disciplines: contemporary biographer, cataloguer of works, art historian and character historian among them. By examining Hollar's life from such different perspectives, it allows this paper to execute something never previously

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[3] Gustave Parthey's catalogue of Hollar's works, *Wenzel Hollar: Beschreibendes Verzeichniss seiner Küpferstiche,* Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1853, is written in German and therefore inaccessible for this author. To that end, Pennington's understanding and use of Parthey's catalogue must suffice for this project.

attempted: a close analysis of a previously unexamined broadsheet from Hollar's portfolio, the *Abraham* series.

Sections three and four are primarily concerned with the political (and inevitably, the religious) situation of England in the seventeenth century, as well as a brief summary of other artists operating at a similar time and location to Hollar. Section three also examines major influences behind, and major themes in Hollar's work. Pieter van der Coelen's *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets: The Old Testament in Netherlandish Printmaking from Lucas van Leyden to Rembrandt* (1996), and Brion & Heinmann's *The Bible in Art: Miniatures, Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures Inspired by the Old Testament* (1956) have provided visual material in this area, and Van der Coelen's book in particular contains an excellent section on the use of Picture Bibles. Pennington also encompasses possible influences and inspirations on Hollar's work which are further discussed in Chapter Three.

As previously stated, the *Abraham* series (and likewise the *Jacob* series), was probably intended to illustrate Bibles; therefore it is essential to examine the relationship between Scripture and the public during the seventeenth century: specifically, how people read and understood the Bible during that time. This interesting yet fairly complicated topic is examined in section four, with particular reference made to the increase in both literacy rates and printed materials. David Daniell's *The Bible in English* (2003) includes an exemplary critical analysis of the effect on the English-speaking population of publishing the Bible in the vernacular, charting the different versions and editions between Tyndale's New Testament in 1525 and the King James Version in 1611. Similarly, Ian Green in *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (2000) emphasises the connection between visual aids and technical apparatus as tools to help people read the Bible, as well as a succinct study of the impact these aids had on Bible study. Several other studies have proved useful as well, particularly *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution* (1991) by Christopher Hill. This book contains several chapters specifying how biblical scriptures – and certain characters – were "used" in the seventeenth century. The chapter entitled "The Bible and Radical Politics" has a large section concerning the use of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph and the different ways in which their narratives were read and interpreted in the seventeenth century. Finally, Michael Jensen's *"Simply" Reading the Geneva Bible: The Geneva Bible and its Readers* is useful in analysing the history of Biblical interpretations, which is valuable when we consider the *Abraham* series as a visual interpretation of the written Word.

Chapter Two is a close reading of the *Abraham* series, dividing the etching panel by panel and examining each one individually. This is preceded by a section introducing the etching which focuses on the possible purpose behind the etching. As it is undated, an attempt is made to estimate when it was most likely produced, drawing on evidence provided by Pennington, van der Coelen, Green and Hill. The main theme of the etching is one of covenant between Abraham and his god YHWH, and so section seven details how the overarching themes in the narrative tie in with political and religious occurrences within England and Scotland around the proposed date of the etching. The other themes include those of 'Land' and 'Son.' In *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative: Thematic Coherence within the Abraham Literary Unit of Genesis 11, 27-25, 18* (1989)*,* Anthony Abela provides a clear, methodical and systematic analysis of the themes within the Abrahamic narrative, linking the themes across chapters and discussing the importance of those themes within Genesis as a whole. Likewise, in *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (1997)*,* David J.A. Clines discusses the themes of the Abraham narrative, but places it within the Pentateuch, arguing that the themes are important in reading the Pentateuch as a whole, or a unity. While this thesis is not concerned with this line of argument, Clines' book does provide good analysis for the themes in Genesis 12-22, even if they are not read with the rest of the Pentateuch. In section nine, the analysis of each panel is concerned primarily with discussing the content within, before discussing the individual panel in context of its themes, messages and where that fits within the political and religious context of the seventeenth century. To that end, section nine makes use of many of the texts already discussed, but also uses primary sources from Hobbes; specifically, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651), and *Elementa philosophica de cive* (1657). Hobbes was a prominent figure in the mid-seventeenth century, arguing for absolute monarchy although he also believed in the view that all such power must be based on the consent of the people. *Elementa philosophica de cive* in particular focused on the subject of the promise between Abraham and God, and the consequences of that arrangement on succeeding generations. Hobbes also alludes to the idea of 'conversation' between Abraham and God, and this is something which Hollar visually represents and repeats throughout the series.

Other resources in Chapter Two include references to commentaries on Genesis. In particular, much use is made of Robert Davidson's *Genesis 12-50: Commentary* (1979), Kessler & Deurloo's *A Commentary on Genesis: The Book of Beginnings* (2004) and Gordon Wenham's *The Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (1994). There is a wealth of commentaries available on Genesis and the Bible in general, and it was difficult

to choose which ones would be most useful, especially as twentieth and twenty-first century commentaries are of limited use when exploring seventeenth century biblical art. Therefore these were chosen according to reviews which highlighted their informative, unbiased (that is, unbiased to particular religious ideologies) contents, and through personal recommendation. It was difficult to source seventeenth century Bible commentaries, and aside from occasional reference to the aforementioned works by Thomas Hobbes, there is very little primary material that is useful from the proposed date that the *Abraham* series was completed. Due to geographical limitations and time constraints, this project is limited to the above-mentioned sources. However this is an issue which the author recognises and endeavours to address in any future publications associated with this work.

Having read the panels separately, Chapter Three proceeds to read the panels together, as a sequence, discussing how this format would have been beneficial in conveying themes and messages to its audience in the seventeenth century. The comparison to modern comic strips is unavoidable, and so modern comic theorists have been useful in explaining the relationship between text and image, and the varied ways in which readers engage with the medium. Scott McCloud, for example, provides a very detailed and perceptive analysis on the definition of comics, the relationship between text and image, and the manner in which comic-book readers engage with the format in his highly acclaimed *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993). Likewise, the celebrated comic writer and artist Will Eisner summarises the reading process involved within comics, outlining the fact that text-image narratives rely upon a "visual experience common to both creator and audience."[4] David Kunzle's *The Early Comic Strip* (Vol. 1, 1973) also provides an excellent definition of comics which is used alongside McCloud's definition in creating a framework for the argument that Hollar's *Abraham* series falls into that category. Chapter Three concludes with a section which briefly examines similar works by Hollar, which also encompass text with image. This is in order to situate the *Abraham* etching within Hollar's work, as well as to show how Hollar continually used text alongside image in order to aid audience understanding. The final section of the chapter discusses possible sources of inspiration for the *Abraham* series, taken mostly from Pennington's short discussion on the etching, as well as from looking at other artists who produced similar designs.

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[4] W. Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist,* W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2008, p. 1.

This early example of a marriage between image and word by Hollar has gone largely unnoticed and therefore undocumented by art historians, comic historians and other scholars. As such this is an original piece of research on a piece of art which has received very little exposure to the public. To that end, this project aims to uncover the meaning behind the etching, the messages which may be hidden underneath layers of interpretation, and the way in which the etching was received by its audience in the seventeenth century. The conclusion to this thesis argues that depicting a biblical narrative in a comic strip format proved extremely useful to those learning how to read for the first time in the seventeenth century. This is mainly due to the manner in which the audience engages with such a format, which is widely discussed in Chapter Three. The medium of etching lends itself well to mass-production and this is another benefit to the new audience of readership, as it meant the etchings were cheap and easily accessible. Both of these points lead to a third benefit, and that is that the predominance of image over text enabled new readers to understand the stories better as there was less reliance on deciphering text and more freedom in interpreting the image – and therefore Scripture – through the reader's own imagination and memory. That the series is a very early example of a comic strip is undeniable, and a fourth aim of this project is to draw attention to this fact, so that the etching will be considered as such by future art and comic historians. Finally, the conclusion argues that the *Abraham* series is sympathetic with Catholic attitudes of the time, in keeping with Hollar's own Catholic and Royalist sympathies. These tendencies are shown through Hollar's careful selection of biblical text, and subtle incorporation of symbols and images throughout the sequence of panels.

II. Chapter One: On Wenceslaus Hollar, Life and Art in Seventeenth-Century England

1. Introduction to the Artist

Under the influence of Rudolph II Habsburg (1552-1612), King of Bohemia and Hungary, the city of Prague flourished in the early 1600s. It became a centre of arts, science and ambition attracting renowned astronomers, scientists and artists to the city.[5] Rudolph II took great pride and pleasure in being known as a collector and patron of the arts, and he was particularly interested in portraiture, miniatures and etched print-work.[6] He had amassed a striking collection of these types of work by greats such as da Vinci, Dürer and Jan Brueghel the Elder, and regularly ensured they were on show in his castle for visitors and guests to view.[7] The King was so interested in art that he became actively involved in the artists' studios, granting commissions to those who impressed him the most. During this time Prague became known as the 'Parnassus of the Arts' and continued to attract foreign talent from the rest of Europe to her gates.

It was in to this richly artistic and creative environment that Wenceslaus Hollar was born in 1607. Destined to become a lawyer, Hollar defied his family's wishes and instead chose to embark upon the path of becoming an artist. He was particularly talented at painting miniatures, and his talents quickly developed into those skills required to become a master printmaker.[8] His father was an Imperial Official within the court of Rudolph II and this would have granted the young Wenceslaus access to the King's collection. Certainly it seems that he was particularly impressed by Dürer's prints and drawings, and this influence resurfaces over the rest of Hollar's working life. However at this early stage, it is

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[5] J. Wisse, "Prague during the Rule of Rudolph II (1583-1612)." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rupr/hd_rupr.htm (November 2013).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] An inscription on a self-portrait from c.1642 (see Fig. 1.3) explains that Hollar was "strongly attracted to the art of miniature painting" *(...a este de nature fort inclin pr. L'art de miniature principalement pour esclairir...)*: A. Thackray, "Thy Shadows Will Outlast the Stone: Wenceslaus Hollar and the Art of the Book." In the Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006, http://link.library.utoronto.ca/hollar/essay.cfm (October 2013).

fair to observe that Hollar was familiar with the collection of the King and that this must have played some part in his desire to become an artist.

Being born into a gentleman's family aided Hollar in his chosen career by giving him both the means to travel and the social skills to associate himself with members of the social elite who would become his clients. Having begun to hone his technique and create a name for himself, Hollar left his home city of Prague in 1627 and this may have been for many reasons. At this time, the Habsburg rulers – Rudolph II had died fifteen years previously – had decreed that all Protestants should convert to Catholicism or leave the city. This was both an effect of the Reformation and the counter-Reformation spreading through Central Europe, as well as a consequence of the ongoing war between the Bourbon and Habsburg rulers (the Thirty Years' War, which, after decades of tension, had broken out in 1618). Hollar's religious allegiances have gone undocumented but Thackray suggests that he may have had Protestant leanings at this time which forced him to leave Prague.[9] However Pennington counters that Hollar may have left simply due to his own desire in order to pursue his artist's career: he was a young man now and had no ties other than familial ones to Prague and Pennington argues that religion had little to do with Hollar's decision.[10]
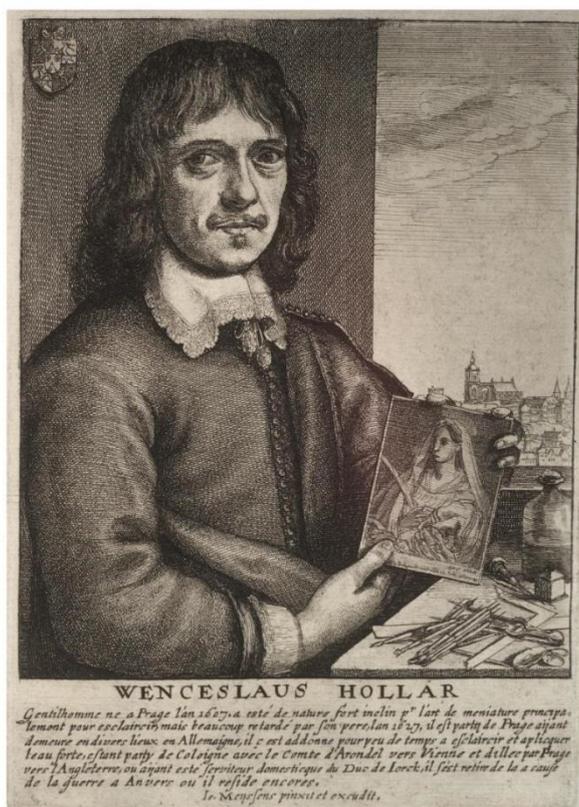
Fig 1.3: *Self Portrait* c. 1642 (State ii).

Section 2 of this chapter will focus entirely on the question of Hollar's religious beliefs and address both Thackray and Pennington's arguments more closely. Either way Hollar left Prague in 1627 and travelled to Stuttgart before moving on to Cologne where he spent several years mastering his art and developing relationships with publishers. It is in Cologne that he met the Earl of Arundel who was to become one of Hollar's most important acquaintances.

The Earl of Arundel was neither a great soldier nor a highly-regarded member of the Royal family in England. He was, however, a leading patron of the Arts and

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[9] Thackray, *Thy Shadows Will Outlast the Stone*.

[10] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xx.

an enthusiastic collector of paintings, prints and sculptures. Upon meeting Hollar, Arundel was impressed with his ability and took him in to the service of his household, eventually bringing him to London to live in 1636. This relationship was to last from 1636 until 1642 and it afforded Hollar the time and financial security to develop and perfect his skills. It was during this time that he produced etchings which covered a vast range of subjects from geographical maps, townscapes, animal studies, fashion studies and copies of work after his favourite artists like Dürer which he would have encountered in Arundel's collections. The Earl's art collection was large and it has been suggested by Thackray that one of the reasons Arundel was so interested in Hollar was that he recognised the artist's ability to create perfect copies of works of art, and he wished for his own collection to be recorded through copies and illustrations.[11] However England was facing turmoil in the shape of the civil war between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, and this threat forced Arundel and his family to flee abroad for protection in 1642 which almost certainly ended the relationship between Hollar and his patron. Certainly there is no evidence to suggest Hollar continued to work for Arundel. Hollar's own sympathies with the Royalists meant that he too was in danger, and in 1644 he too fled with his family to Antwerp.

Pennington suggests that Hollar's Antwerp years were among his most prolific in terms of work output.[12] Upon his arrival in 1644, Hollar was quick to register himself with the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp as a 'free master.' This meant he could legally work in the industry and that he was connected with other artists and publishers.[13] He made himself known to those people and took as many commissions as he could manage. All in all, over the seven years he spent in exile, Hollar created at least 350 prints – an average of one a week.[14] Interestingly, his most important works from this period are his impressive etchings of London. Most probably etched from drawings and sketches created years before, Hollar also drew on memories of his former home to complete the etchings. He continued his work of documenting the Earl of Arundel's massive collection; again, most likely from earlier drawings, sketches and memory. There is some suggestion that although no longer under the Earl's patronage, Hollar may have still had access to his former sponsor's art collection since Arundel had also fled to Antwerp, however there is no clear evidence of a continuing relationship between the two.[15] Hollar was successful in Antwerp;

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[11] Thackray *Thy Shadows Will Outlast the Stone*, and Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xxii.
[12] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. xxx-xxxi.
[13] M. Roberts, *Dugdale and Hollar: History Illustrated.* Rosemount Publishing and Printing Corp: London, 2002, p. 14.
[14] A. Griffiths & G. Kesnerova, *Wenceslaus Hollar: Prints and Drawings*, British Museums Publications Ltd: London, 1983, p. 44.
[15] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xxxi.

he had moved to a vibrantly creative city and his name grew in renown amongst the artist community. Despite this success and stability, when the 1652 Act of General Pardon and Oblivion was passed in the city removing the danger of Hollar being prosecuted as a Royalist, he made the decision to return to London.

Upon his return, he found a battered and bruised city, fresh from the purges of civil war with a Monarchy and Government in pieces. No longer protected by Arundel's patronage, Hollar had to eke out his own living which he proved very capable of doing. Working mostly for Sir William Dugdale and then John Ogilby, the last twenty-five years of Hollar's life were spent creating some of the finest etched folios seen during that period. Amongst his best were the illustrations to Ogilby's *Aesopics* (1654) and his precise documenting of St. Paul's Cathedral for Dugdale (which appears in Dugdale's *History of St Paul's Cathedral* published in 1658).[16] Hollar continued to produce folios of impressive length and skill but in his later years focused mostly on map-making, topography and landscapes. One of his most ambitious plans was to complete a large map of London which would document every single building in the city: it would be "10 foot in bredth and 5 foot upward wherein shall be expressed, not only the Streets, Lanes, Alleys etc. proportionably measured; but also the buildings."[17] He petitioned the King for funds towards the project and was successful but the dream was never to come to fruition. The Great Fire of London in 1666 put paid to the map, and any work which had begun was now rendered useless due to the destruction of the city. Instead, Hollar completed a 'Before' and 'After' print of the city which is one of the few still extant and largely complete visions of pre-fire London (see Fig 1.4).

Fig 1.4: *London Before and after the Fire,* 1666 (State ii).

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[16] Both of these folios can be seen in *The Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection,* Fisher Library, University of Toronto, accessible at: http://link.library.utoronto.ca/hollar/.

[17] Griffiths & Kesnerova, *Prints and Drawings*, p. 43.

Samuel Pepys saw the etchings and noted in his diary: "my Lord Bruncker did show me Hollar's new print of the City, with a pretty representation of that part which is burnt, very fine indeed." He also goes on to describe how Hollar had been appointed as the Royal scenographer and urged to continue with a smaller-scale map of London.[18]

Hollar continued to work on geographical and topographical projects. In 1669, he was appointed by Charles II to go to Tangier and document the landscape and topography of the country. The voyage and expedition lasted roughly nine months and was largely uneventful save for one episode: the return voyage saw Hollar's ship, the *Marie Rose*, attacked by Algerian pirates. Being such a keen documentarian, Hollar created an etching of the occurrence which showed the *Marie Rose* surrounded by six Algerian ships. On his return to London, Hollar continued to work in much the same vein, taking commissions from print-publishers and using his unrivalled talent in depicting landscapes to keep his family fed. He had by this time remarried following the death of his first wife in 1653, and he had also lost his first son to the plague in 1665. Though he was recognised as an accomplished etcher and industrious man, Hollar was never rich. There are some who claim he was not always paid fairly and others who suggest he was not very clever with his money.[19] Either way, Hollar died on the 25th March, 1677 a relatively poor man, leaving his second wife and two children. He is buried in St. Margaret's Westminster, London.

2. Hollar's Religious Beliefs

Hollar's religious identity is at first glance, unclear. He never gave a definitive answer as to where his sentiments lay, and his art was almost devoid of religious preference. A few incidents throughout his life give hints as to his thoughts, but it has been left up to others to deduce possible answers. The assumption of most scholars has been that Hollar was most probably born into a Protestant family before converting to Catholicism later in life – probably during his time serving Arundel.[20] Many reasons are given for this deduction; firstly the circumstances of Hollar's departure from his home city of Prague; secondly his

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[18] S. Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A Selection*, R Latham (ed.) Penguin Classics: London, 2003, p. 1024.

[19] J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, O.L. Dick (ed.), Secker & Warburg: London, 1958, pp. 162-163.

[20] For example, see: Aubrey, (O.L. Dick, ed.,) p. 162; Griffiths & Kesnerova, *Prints and Drawings*, pp. 5; V. Denkstein, *Hollar Drawings*, D. Orpington (trans.) Orbis Books: London, 1979, pp. 14-15.

supposed conversion at the hands of the Jesuits in Antwerp sometime in the 1640s; and thirdly, his arrest after attending Mass in 1656.

In 1627, a Habsburg decree stripped Protestants of their land and stipulated that they must convert to Catholicism or emigrate; a further decree of 1629 transferred the property of Protestants to Catholic families.[21] John Aubrey, an English contemporary and friend of Hollar's, stated that Hollar's family were ruined by this decree and that the young Hollar left to make his own fortune in foreign fields.[22] However this is not strictly true, and there is no evidence that Hollar's family were ruined; indeed on the contrary Pennington suggests that they were either overlooked or left alone by the Catholic rulers, perhaps due to the father's rank and title of 'Knight of the Empire.'[23] There is no record of the Hollar family losing their estate either in this manner or around this time. Aubrey may have been either exaggerating what he thought to be true, or he simply may have fabricated the entire story to 'fill-up' his biography of Hollar. Though popular and well-liked, Aubrey was not the most reliable biographer, often confusing or embellishing his facts as well as writing under the influence of alcohol. To that end, his work *Brief Lives* (which he worked on between the years of 1681-1693) is recognised as not being the most accurate of works.[24] However, Aubrey probably believed his assertion that Hollar's family were Protestant to be correct, and probably also understood this to have had something to do with the young Hollar leaving Prague. The majority of Hollar's biographers agree with him. Vladimir Denkstein has traced familial links between the Hollar family and Protestantism,[25] and this conclusion is accepted by most of Hollar's early biographers including George Vertue who, writing in the eighteenth century, asserted (probably incorrectly) that "[Hollar] and his relations, being opposite to the Imperial Interest & spearing in Armes, were entirely ruined (1620)."[26]

More recent scholars dispute the claim that Hollar left Prague to avoid the repercussions of the Catholic rule. Pennington contends that religion played little or no part in Hollar's life

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[21] A. Thomas, *A House Divided: Wittelsbach Confessional Court Cultures in the Holy Roman Empire, c. 1550-1650*, Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, 2010, pp. 251-252.
[22] Aubrey (O.L. Dick, ed.), pp. 324-325.
[23] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue,* p. xix.
[24] J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives,* R Barber (ed.) Boydell Press: Suffolk, 1982, pp. 4-5.
[25] Denkstein, *Hollar Drawings*, pp. 14-15.
[26] G. Vertue, "A Description of the Works of the Ingenious Delineator and Engraver Wenceslaus Hollar, disposed into classes of different sorts; with some account of his life" in Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale: http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=glasuni&tabID=T001&docId=CW3302247818&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>.1759 pp. 155-156 (November 2013).

and that there is no evidence that he was from a Protestant heritage. Rather, Pennington argues that the Emperor's grant of arms to the father

> Who was given the right to add 'de Prachna' to his name, obviously indicates his satisfactory financial and social status; and issued by the Catholic Emperor, the grant is certainly proof of conformity with the Catholic faith.[27]

Pennington sees the financial status of the Hollar family as proof that they were not ruined by the Sack of Prague, and suggests that their social status was a sign that the family were Catholic. However his inclination to ignore Aubrey's evidence (he suggests: "Aubrey's statement that his father was a Protestant must be disregarded,"[28]) seems misguided. Pennington clearly thinks that Hollar can be defined as Protestant or Catholic and the evidence as he reads it points to Catholicism. He does not see a third possible way to define Hollar's religion.

Two other incidents which occur in Hollar's life help to identify his later religious allegiance: his 'conversion' by the Jesuits in Antwerp, and his arrest after attending an ambassadorial Mass in London. The second event is corroborated by all biographers of Hollar and does little more than offer proof that in 1656 Hollar was a practicing Catholic. He was bound over in the sum of £40 at the Middlesex sessions for hearing Mass and there were no further repercussions.[29] His alleged conversion in Antwerp is less of a clear-cut matter. John Evelyn provides the evidence for this, stating in a diary entry concerning Hollar that he was "perverted at last by the Jesuits at Antwerp to change his religion."[30] Aubrey is less precise, asserting that "Winceslaus dyed a Catholique, of which religion, I suppose, he might be ever since he came to Arundel-howse" implying that Hollar considered himself Catholic before he left for Antwerp.[31] There is no further information to go on and it is surprising that Aubrey is not familiar enough with Evelyn's versions of events to include it in Hollar's biography, as the two were known to each other. However both Aubrey and Evelyn, and following them every other scholar who has written on Hollar's life agree that Hollar was officially considered Catholic at some point after the mid-1640s.[32]

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[27] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xix.

[28] Ibid, p. xix.

[29] R. J. D. Harding, "Hollar, Wenceslaus (1607-1677) in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13549 (November 2013).

[30] J. Evelyn, (J. Bowle, ed.) *The Diary of John Evelyn,* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1983, pp. 21-22.

[31] Aubrey, (O.L. Dick, ed.) p. 162.

[32] Pennington interprets Evelyn's words as implying that Hollar was already Catholic and that the incident in Antwerp was not a traditional conversion but more a reaffirmation of Hollar's already-present faith. He suggests that this is probably why Hollar was arrested attending mass some years later: he had been converted into a very different kind of Catholic, "one that was ready to return to Protestant England and defy

The lack of clarity on this matter is not helped by Hollar himself who in the course of the 1640s produced artwork for both Catholic and Protestant factions in England – for example, his Catholic images of the *Life, Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus* for the Archbishop of Canterbury's personal Bible were probably produced in the same decade as his etching of *The Solemn League and Covenant* (Fig 1.5), a Scottish-inspired, anti-Catholic manifesto which set out the programme for which Protestants were fighting during the civil war.[33] He also produced a fine illustration of the first twenty-one articles of the *Augsburg Confession* during his life which was one of the most important documents of the Lutheran Reformation. It seems that no matter what his own religious feelings were, Hollar's primary interest was in creating etchings and making a living.
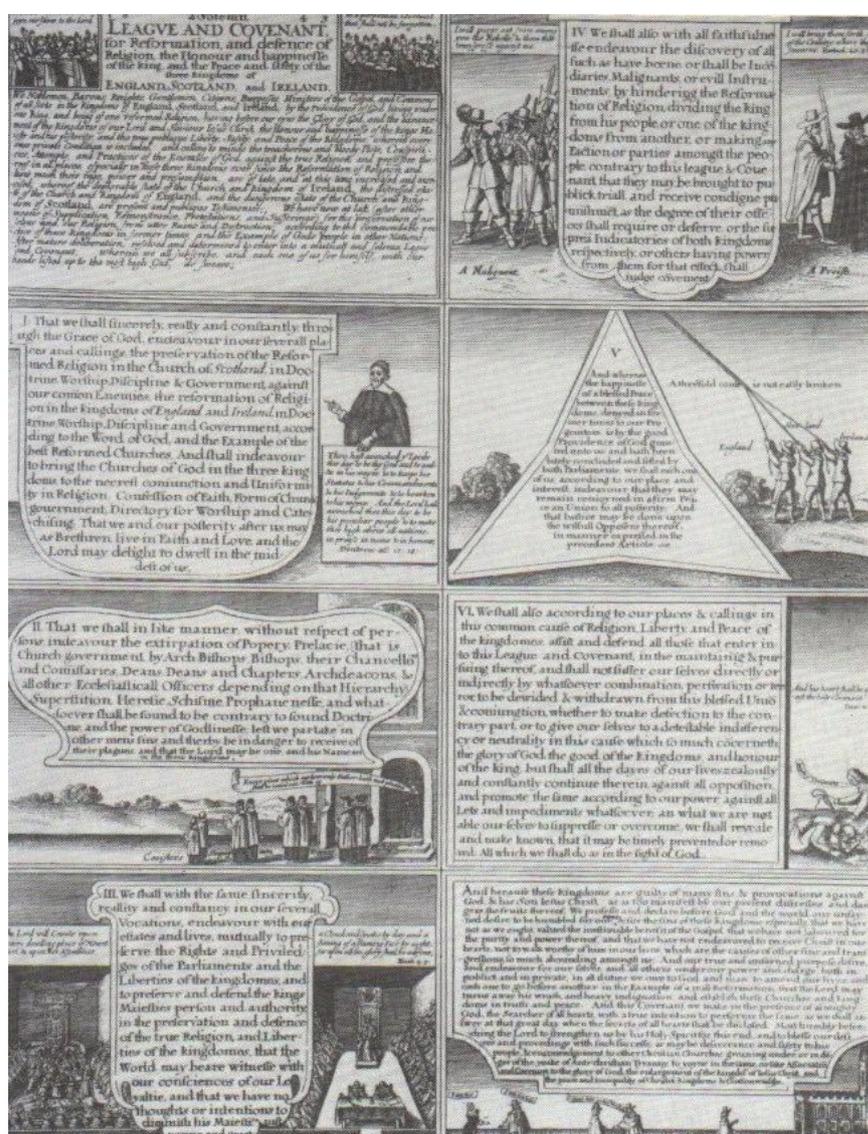
Fig 1.5: *Illustration to the Solemn League & Covenant,* 1643 (State unknown).

Both sides of the argument, however, fail to take into account the religious climate of early seventeenth-century Bohemia. Here Springell offers a corrective (which Pennington acknowledges and rejects),[34] and consequently his biography of Hollar offers a different and persuasive reading of Hollar's religion. Springell explains that post-Reformation Bohemia was divided into different religious sects; the main four being Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Bohemian Brethren and Utraquist. The Utraquist faction was a local religious movement inspired by the teachings of Jan Hus and his subsequent martyrdom in 1415, and it practiced communion in both kinds (i.e. both bread and wine for all, not just the priesthood) and vernacular scripture, accessible for all members of the community. In 1575 a schism in the Utraquist movement saw part of the sect move towards the Bohemian Brethren and another part move closer to the Roman Catholics.[35] Springell believes that Hollar's family had roots in the Utraquist movement, specifically the 'Old Utraquists' who differed from the Church of Rome only in minor details (albeit in details which for outsiders could make them look Protestant). In 1593 the Utraquist movement finally renounced the teachings of Hus and acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope.[36]

If the Hollar family were Utraquists, it would explain not only why they were considered by some to be Protestant (due to some minor similarities), but also why the Catholic leaders did not persecute the family during the Sack of Prague in 1620, and finally, why Hollar himself did not elucidate the confusion of his religion. As Springell notes,

> To explain all the finesse of the distinction between the creeds in Bohemia to a foreigner may have discouraged Wenceslaus Hollar from clearing up the mystery to his English friends. It was, after all, easier to state that one belonged to a reformed church, particularly if, by saying so, one was not making any false assertion.[37]

It may also explain why it took Hollar until at least the mid-1640s to profess his new-found faith in Catholicism. The Utraquist movement was essentially Catholic in liturgy and creed, and the need to publicly declare his Catholic beliefs may have occurred after his move to Antwerp. This was a strategic moment for Hollar to publicly commit to a doctrine and creed with which he would have been familiar all his life, albeit by a different name. Thackray also makes the point that Hollar was anticipating the market in Antwerp to be

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[34] Ibid, pp. xix-xx.
[35] G. Murdoch, 'Eastern Europe', in: *The Reformation World,* A. Pettegree (ed.), Routledge: London, 2000, pp. 194-195.
[36] F. C. Springell, *Connoisseur & Diplomat: The Earl of Arundel's Embassy to Germany in 1636 as recounted in William Crowne's Diary. The Earl's letters and other contemporary sources with a catalogue of the topographical drawings made on the journey by Wenceslaus Hollar.* Shenval Press: London, 1963, p. 139.
[37] Ibid, p. 140.

predominately Catholic, so by choosing to 'convert' or reaffirm at this time, Hollar was making himself attractive to potential clients.[38]

Springell's argument seems to offer a rational logical resolution of the mystery surrounding Hollar's religion. Bohemia was a fractious and confused religious environment that was made up of many different sects holding beliefs that were not very different from their counterparts. It is the only explanation of Hollar's religious preference that takes into account his environment, his family ties and his later 'conversion' which, viewed in this light, does not seem as extreme as first thought. It also suggests Hollar left Prague in 1627 because, as Pennington suggests, he was a young man ready to travel and carve out a career for himself.[39] The centre of arts in Prague created under Rudolph II had long since faded, but printmaking and drawing was increasingly popular in other areas of Europe. Added to that, Prague was a war zone and consequently was not a particularly safe place to be, regardless of Hollar's religious choices.[40] Leaving Prague to forge a career was a clever and safe move, and this suggestion is further supported by the fact that he only returned to Prague once, very briefly, over the rest of his life. There was simply no burgeoning market there to cater to his ambitions. However Pennington is not entirely correct when he says that Hollar's work was almost devoid of feeling on religious subjects. A close examination of the *Abraham* etchings in Chapter Two will show that Hollar included specific references to the religious situation around him which subtly allude to his own allegiances.

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[38] Thackray, *Thy Shadows Will Outlast the Stone*.

[39] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xx.

[40] Rudolph II was succeeded as King of Bohemia in 1611 by his brother Matthias (Rudolph became Holy Roman Emperor but died shortly after this, in 1612). In 1617, Ferdinand II succeeded Matthias. Ferdinand II was very strongly anti-Protestant, and it was under him that the Protestants became unwelcome in Prague. The Thirty Years War broke out a year after Ferdinand took the throne. He became Holy Roman Emperor in 1619 and he organised a substantial effort to rid Bohemia of Protestantism and instead encouraged conversion to Catholicism. It was in this tumultuous period that Hollar grew up, and his family will have experienced the turmoil first hand, as well as the beginning of the Thirty Years War. Thanks are due to Dr. C. Methuen, University of Glasgow for this point.

Growing up under the dying influence of Rudolph II's community of artists, as the son of an Imperial Official, the young Wenceslaus Hollar had access to a multitude of works by renowned artists. Rudolph's castle housed prints by the finest Renaissance artists: da Vinci, Titian and Rembrandt among them. He was also an avid collector of works by Jan van Leyden, Jan and Pieter Brueghel, Adam Elsheimer and most importantly (for Hollar), Albrecht Dürer. The latter was one of the greatest influences on Hollar, particularly when Hollar turned his attentions to printmaking after his initial interest in painting miniatures. Harding and Pennington both suggest that Hollar may have trained under the etcher Aegidius Sadeler,[41] but there are no confirmed records of his ever having undertaken professional tuition. The assumption probably stems from some of Hollar's early works, particularly in his etchings after Dürer and Beham, which were supposedly etched in a style similar to Sadeler.[42] Aegidius Sadeler came from a family of known painters and etchers and lived in Prague from 1597 until his death in 1629. He was probably employed by Rudolph II and kept on under Rudolph's successors, Matthias and Ferdinand II. Even though he was young at that time, Hollar may have met Sadeler in royal circles and certainly Sadeler was as enamoured with Dürer's work as the young Hollar, so it is feasible that Sadeler and Hollar may have shared a connection. The earliest surviving prints we have from Hollar date from around 1625, when he was eighteen, and include those Sadeler-inspired copies after Dürer and Beham. Other prominent etchers during this time in Hollar's life included Bartholomeus Spranger, Hendrick Goltzius and Hans von Aachen, all of whom are considered Northern Mannerist artists and were associated with Prague. Spranger in particular was known for etching and he both lodged with, and taught, Sadeler. Hollar's art has been described as akin to that of the Mannerist movement:

> His art reveals features that for centuries have been characteristic of Czech art, namely a balance between sober matter-of-factness and realism of outlook on one hand, and a sensual involvement and emotionality on the other.[43]

The beginning of the Thirty Years' War in Bohemia witnessed a surge in propaganda materials which were often etched or engraved to increase production and aid dissemination. Though he was only eleven years old when the War broke out, Hollar may have been exposed to the material and it is quite possible that Hollar was also influenced

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[41] Harding, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography;* Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xx.
[42] Harding, *National Biography.*
[43] Griffiths & Kesnerova, *Prints and Drawings*, p. 4.

by these pieces, if in later years and by memory. One work which details the expulsions of the Jesuits from Bohemia in 1618 uses a format which expresses narrative through the use of panels;[44] this is a format which Hollar occasionally employed and is indeed the format in which the *Abraham* series (and *Jacob* series) is produced. Similar formats are found in other propagandist art appearing during and after this time, largely in Germany, to which Hollar may have been exposed during his travels in 1627 and onwards.

Later in his life, Hollar took inspiration from the printmaking communities in whichever city he lived. London was not considered as progressive or ground-breaking in terms of art as other European cities such as Antwerp or Paris, but in the early-to-mid part of the seventeenth century it did have a thriving printing scene which was fuelled by the Monarchy's penchant for the medium. Griffiths noted that in the mid-seventeenth century, most publishers were located around both the St. Paul's churchyard area and the Royal Exchange in Cornhill,[45] and Samuel Pepys also recorded these facts in excerpts from his diary.[46] These publishers had started businesses in response to the growing influence from Europe: artist migrants were beginning to settle in London in the aftermath of events like the Spanish invasion of the Netherlands in 1567 which forced mass-emigrations.[47] Other incomers included those from Antwerp and Cologne, and the convergence of artists breathed new life and inspiration in to a print scene that has previously been preoccupied with producing cartography and royal portraiture. Hollar fell into the category of the newcomer, bringing his experience and fresh ideas with him to London in 1636. His time at Arundel House exposed him to the Earl's collections of prints and sculptures, and his continued fascination with Dürer and the Old Masters was satisfied by the chance to view many of their works at close range from the collection. He built up a network of publishers and artists in London probably through visiting the hub at St. Paul's churchyard, some of whom would later move to Antwerp around a similar time as Hollar. Other artists of eminence at this time included foreign-born engravers Lucas Vorsterman (who was the primary engraver to Rubens) and Robert van Voerst.[48]

Hollar, Vorsterman and van Voerst were considered far superior to their British-born rivals and this was reflected in the fact that they monopolised orders of etchings from Charles I

[44] D. Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c. 1450 to 1825* (Vol. 1) University of California Press: London, 1973, p. 71.
[45] A. Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain 1603-1689*, British Museum Press: London, 1998, p. 14.
[46] Pepys, *Diary,* p. 35.
[47] Griffiths, *Print in Stuart Britain*, p. 13.
[48] P. van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets: The Old Testament in Netherlands Printmaking from Lucas van Leyden to Rembrandt,* Museum Het Rembrandthuis: Amsterdam, 1996, pp. 22-23.

and many of his court.[49] When the civil war broke out, Robert van Voerst relocated to Antwerp around the same time as Hollar. Hollar was probably also influenced by the work of Jacques Callot, specifically in reference to his allegorical set of *Four Seasons* (1641) which uses the compositional pattern invented by Callot in the 1610s.[50] Callot's *Miseries of War* was published in 1633 and this may also have had an indirect influence on Hollar who was still travelling around Germany at this point and may have come into contact with the work through one of his printers. *Miseries of War* was much acclaimed and recognised to be a clever and detailed account of the war which ravaged Bohemia and the Lowlands.[51]

Hollar was associated with many publishers over his career, although was also known to self-publish his work on occasion. Abraham Hogenberg of Cologne published the first set of major Hollar works in 1625, and Hollar also had links to Jacob van der Heyden in Strasburg and Matthaeus Merian in Frankfurt-am-Main. During his years in Antwerp he had contact with as many as eleven different publishers,[52] some of whom were connections from his time in London. He was in fine company in Europe's hub of printmakers and his membership of the Guild of St. Luke meant he was part of a flourishing scene of printmakers and artists. He was much in demand. In a letter to John Evelyn, Hendrick van der Borcht, curator to the Arundel's art collection, wrote that Hollar "is very much esteemd in these parts and Especially in Antwerp where he is nouw dwelling. Many Lovers of arts make Collections of all his Worckes."[53] Hollar continued to be inspired by artists from his early years, producing copies after Holbein, Dürer, da Vinci and Elsheimer well into his established career, most of which were taken from the Arundel collection. He was also impressed with the work of Antony van Dyck to whom he may have been introduced during his time in London with Arundel.[54] Van Dyck, however, did not reciprocate the sentiment: etching was not as highly considered as engraving and van Dyck had very little respect for the medium.[55]

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[49] Griffiths, *Print in Stuart Britain*, p. 72.
[50] Griffiths notes that the "type of figure set on a high platform before a distant landscape" is attributed entirely to Callot and was a format adopted universally by printmakers' after its inception. Ibid, p. 115.
[51] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, p. 80.
[52] Griffiths & Kesnerova, *Prints and Drawings*, p. 43.
[53] Harding, *National Biography.*
[54] Thackray, *Thy Shadows Will Outlast the Stone.*
[55] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xlix.

Fig 1.6: *Charles I* (Date and State unknown).

Aside from other artists and printers, Hollar was influenced by two other major factors: firstly the Monarchy, or more specifically, the members of royalty with whom he was acquainted, and secondly, his desire to create records. Many of his etchings are portraits of royalty (see Fig 1.6) or scenes depicting royal events, and he dedicated major works to his patron Arundel and other dignitaries. He had always considered himself a gentleman, presenting himself as a son of Bohemia (adding 'Bohem' to his signature), and returning to Prague in 1636 with the sole intention of confirming that has father had been granted his title of 'Knight of the Empire.' This title allowed Hollar to call himself 'Prachenberger von Lowengrun und Bareyt' and gave him a sense of rank and status. By creating images of and for the English Monarchy, Hollar was continuing to support his image of a gentleman.

The other major theme running throughout Hollar's work is his fascination with chronicling the world precisely as he viewed it. He produced prints that carefully detailed features of Old St. Paul's Cathedral; he travelled the southern parts of England documenting townscape scenery and other cathedrals; and he illustrated books in a timeless manner which even now, allows viewers to see and understand seventeenth-century London. Hollar approached his work in a way which still enables viewers to perceive what life was like in that era. From his faithful reproductions of other artists' work to his records of townscapes and maps, his copies of women's clothing styles to his version of the pirate attack off the coast of Tangier, Hollar was a highly skilled seventeenth-century documentarian. Sir Francis Seymour Haden once remarked:

> If anyone wants truth without pretension, let him go to Hollar. If he wants perfection of "biting" and the precise degree of gradation required let him also go to Hollar. If he want to live in the time he undertook to illustrate, let him again go to Hollar. People sometimes say to me, "What is it you see in Hollar?" and I always answer, "Not quite, but nearly everything."[56]

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[56] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. vii.

His desire to represent his work in a straightforward and accurate fashion is present in most of his work and this historiographical style will be an important point when we turn to analyse his prints of Old Testament themes.

4. Reading the Bible in the Seventeenth Century

Having briefly described Hollar's life, explored his religious choices and situated his art in context of other artists and artworks, this section focuses on the topic of literacy in the seventeenth century. The purpose of the *Abraham* etching was to be used as a visual aid to understanding Scripture, and this section describes the rise of literacy, the use of such aids and the impact increasing readership had on interpretation and understanding of biblical narrative. The seventeenth century was a tumultuous time in the history of the Bible. The Protestant Reformation in the 1500s had revolutionised the way in which the Bible was both used and read. In England, the first – and most important – change was the translation of the Bible into the English language. William Tyndale's Bible followed on from earlier attempts at translating passages from Hebrew or Greek to English, but he was the first to attempt to produce a complete version of the Bible taken directly from the ancient languages which he himself translated. His translation of the New Testament was printed in 1526 and he succeeded in producing a translation of the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah in 1530-31.[57]

Tyndale was executed before he could complete the rest of the translation, however Miles Coverdale translated the remaining parts of the Old Testament from German and Latin rather than from the Hebrew or Septuagint.[58] The availability of the Bible in the vernacular impacted Christian thought and practice in a substantial way. It made a text which had traditionally been imparted orally by a priest or clergyman more accessible to the literate and to those around them. This, combined with the development of the printing press, meant that people who could afford to do so could now own personal copies of the Bible. David Daniell estimates that between 1525 and 1640 "printed English Bibles and parts numbered, at a modest estimate, over two million."[59] The 'parts' which he mentions refer

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[57] D. Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography,* Yale University Press: Connecticut, 1994, p. 205.
[58] M. Payne, J. Barbera (ed.) *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd: West Sussex, 2nd edition, 2010, p. 72.
[59] D. Daniell, *The Bible in English.* Yale University Press: London, 2003, p. 121.

not only to part texts, but also to visual aids and technical apparatus which will be examined below. Ten different versions of an English Bible were published between Tyndale's New Testament in 1525 and the King James Version in 1611, including the Geneva Bible; an avowedly Protestant translation designed to help the 'simple' reader understand the text. This is significant when we come to look at Hollar's *Abraham* series and will be discussed more fully in the next paragraph. Although a significant proportion of the English population was illiterate, literacy rates were on the rise fuelled in part by publishers, authors and booksellers who facilitated learning to read in order to create and maintain a customer base in the marketplace.[60] Literacy was also encouraged by Protestants who wanted lay people to be able to read Scripture.

The Geneva Bible was a curious yet outstanding achievement. Created in Geneva (as the name suggests) and first published in 1560, it was translated by a team of Protestant scholars who had fled from the tyranny of Queen Mary I of England.[61] Under the supervision of William Whittingham, the Geneva Bible was composed from original translations of Greek and Hebrew scripture but it also drew significantly on Tyndale's New Testament and Coverdale's Bible: in fact some sources estimate as much as eighty per cent of the Geneva Bible is based on these sources, owing to its use of the same or similar language.[62] What really made the Geneva Bible stand out were the accompanying notes and commentaries. It was not uncommon for Bible readers to make use of visual aids or technical apparatus to help their understanding,[63] but the increase in vernacular Bible translations and the resulting increase in literacy rates spurred publishers and editors into incorporating these aids more often; it was a way of casting "the net of readership wider" (i.e. increasing the number of buyers) as well as developing new products for consumers to buy.[64] The Geneva Bible specifically employed the use of annotations and marginal notes to explain biblical Scripture to its readers. It was, in essence, trying to demystify Scripture by providing an explanation, but this in turn meant the text carried overtones of the translators' bias, in this case, Calvinist Protestantism. The Geneva Bible reeked so profoundly of a Protestant agenda that it was banned in England and had to be smuggled in, but when it did reach English readers, it proved to be very popular and successful,

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[60] I. Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England.* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000, pp. 44-66.

[61] F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English.* The Lutterworth Press: Cambridge, 2002, 3rd edition, pp. 86-91.

[62] Daniell, *Bible in English*, p. 448.

[63] Some Latin bibles – such as the Biblia Magna (1525, Lyon) - were accompanied by tables, cross-references and translations from Hebrew, as well as a few images to aid readers in understanding the sometimes complex text. See: Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 66.

[64] Ibid.

rivalling Coverdale's own version. The Geneva Bible was the most widely read book of any kind in the Elizabethan era and into the seventeenth century.[65] In 1577 it became the first Bible to be printed in Scotland, probably owing to the Calvinist connection and to the fact John Knox was involved with its production. Scots were encouraged to own a copy.[66]

Michael Jensen argues that the Geneva Bible and in particular, its use of reading aids, targeted the 'simple' reader. This is important because it details a new demographic with access to Scripture, which in turn affects the way in which the Bible was read into the seventeenth century and beyond. According to Jensen, the 'simple' reader was innocent, humble and placed him or herself "under the authority of the Bible; needless to say, the 'simple' reader is asked to accept the Bible's authority as it is transmitted in the translation of the Genevan exiles." He adds that use of the 'simple' has anti-Catholic overtones; it reflected "the Protestant critique of Catholic adornments and superstitions and the Protestant desired for plainness of worship."[67] The idea that Scripture has a clear and simple meaning was also seen as typically Protestant. The Geneva Bible was considered by both Catholics and Protestants to be aimed at Protestant followers and the annotations and marginal notes reflected this, usually adopting a gently persuasive tone to highlight Protestant ideals over Catholic ones.[68] These 'simple' readers were encouraged to read the Scriptures carefully and studiously to ensure complete comprehension; only then were they to apply the message gleaned from the text to their everyday lives.[69] Including annotations with the biblical text not only demarcated reader interpretations, it also took the Bible out of its sacred setting in churches and cathedrals, placing it firmly in a family-oriented or private setting. It meant the Bible was no longer 'owned' by a single authority, whether ecclesiastical or political.[70] Tyndale's hope (which he derived from Erasmus), that an English translation would "causeth the boy who driveth the plough" to read and understand the Bible as well as the clergy, was coming true.[71]

As well as annotated Bibles, there was a substantial increase in the production of other religious-based literature. Concordances, lexicons, Psalters, aids to meditation, treatises and sermons on a life in faith were just some examples of such literature and were equally

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[65] M. Jensen, "Simply" Reading the Geneva Bible: The Geneva Bible and its Readers. *The Journal of Literature & Theology,* Vol. 9. Issue 1, 1995, p. 31.
[66] Bruce, *History of the Bible in English*, p. 92.
[67] Jensen, *"Simply" Reading the Geneva Bible*, pp. 34-35.
[68] For examples, see Jensen, *"Simply Reading the Geneva Bible*, p. 36, in which he discusses the use of Anglo-Saxon words over the preferred Latin and the use of Wycliffe's Bible over Tyndale's.
[69] According to Miles Coverdale, in Jensen, *"Simply" Reading the Geneva Bible*, p. 32.
[70] Ibid, p. 43.
[71] Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*, p. 79.

popular with both Protestants and Catholics.[72] Green asserts that the popularity of religious literature along with annotated Bibles was part of a reaction against "what was seen as the undue emphasis on allegorical interpretations in the Middle Ages," and that the printing of these aids and guides to a life in faith represented a return to a more literal and moralistic reading of the Bible.[73] Illustrations for English Bibles were not popular in the first half of the seventeenth century but increased in number after the 1650s, especially in the latter half of that decade when John Ogilby commissioned and published a great number of them.[74] As Green suggests, biblical illustrations in this period reflected the return to a moralistic reading of the Bible by showcasing certain stories "which told the uninitiated to learn from the events in the historical books of the Bible how God punished vice and rewarded virtue."[75] They thus became an important visual aid for both the literate and illiterate, replacing medieval wall-paintings in churches. It is in to this category that the subject of this thesis, Wenceslaus Hollar's *Abraham* series falls, which will be closely examined in Chapter Two.

Other factors affecting the reception and understanding of the Bible in the seventeenth century included newly opened trade routes to Asia and the Middle East. This brought merchants and trades-people into contact with Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The effect of 'discovering' these religions was profound for some, and brought questions of authenticity, authority and religious doctrine to the forefront of religious discourse. An English translation of the Qur'an was published in 1649; this led the Christian writer and preacher John Bunyan to doubt the authority of the Bible because he noted that the Qur'an's traditional authority in the Islamic Middle East was as steadfast as the authority of the Bible in the world of Christianity.[76] The realisation that foreign countries had well-established religious doctrines and practices that differed to Christianity increased the need to 'prove' that Christianity was the one true religion. In fact, this, in combination with the new vernacular translations of the Bible and the increase in commentaries and annotations giving advice and guidance on the meaning of Scripture meant the seventeenth-century Bible reader was confronted by profound questions of who and what to believe. Which version of the Bible was correct or authentic? Were the

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[72] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 102.
[73] Ibid, p. 105.
[74] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xliv.
[75] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 166.
[76] C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, The Penguin Press: Middlesex, 1993, p. 230.

translations from the ancient languages accurate? Which commentary provided the correct guidance to a life based on faith?

One reaction to this was the rise of the antiquary, someone who studied ancient histories with particular emphasis on empirical evidence to prove or disprove historical events.[77] As Miller explains, seventeenth-century antiquaries and philologists were concerned with "setting out to prove, by the most sophisticated methods available, that sacred history was historical."[78] Under the banner of humanism and 'Historia Sacra' scholars were encouraged to explore documents and artefacts relating to Christianity and explain how they 'proved' the Christian religion was the one true religion, and the Bible truly was the Word of God. Scholarship was used solely to "amplify the conclusions reached by faith," not to undermine it.[79] Of course it was impossible to prove the Bible was the Word of God or that Christianity was the one true religion, and the general public were questioning the authenticity of the text more than ever.[80] One man reacted to this by creating London's own Polyglot Bible which was intended to enable the reader to compare the English version to the ancient texts with general ease. Brian Walton was a priest and a divine from Yorkshire, who in 1660 would become Bishop of Chester. Following from other cities' great works of Polyglot Bibles, Walton proposed to create one for London. The work was completed and published in 1657 and the frontispiece was etched by Wenceslaus Hollar (see Fig 1.7). The London Polyglot was heralded as a triumph of technology

Fig 1.7: *Frontispiece to the Polyglot Bible,* 1657 (State iii).

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[77] See: P. N. Miller, "The "Antiquarianisation" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57)." in *Journal of the History of Ideas.* Vol. 62 (2001) pp. 463-482.
[78] Ibid, p. 464.
[79] Ibid, p. 465.
[80] For an in-depth understanding of the problems associated with interpreting biblical scripture, as well as the question of authenticity and authority, see: Saebo, M. (2008) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* Vol. II Section B, especially: Evans, G.R. *Scriptural Interpretation in Pre-Reformation Dissident Movements* pp. 295-318.

owing to the successful printing of nine languages side by side on one page, and the greatest Polyglot ever produced, because of the number of languages it incorporated. The languages – some texts were offered in nine versions – included Persian, Ethiopic, Arabic and Latin as well as the ancient languages of Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldean and Syriac, reflecting the closer ties to the Ottoman Empire established during the seventeenth century. It also included the seven apocryphal books and a Syriac translation of Esther which no other Polyglot Bible had.[81] Dismayed by the questions of authenticity and authority which continued to surround the Bible, Walton sought to create a "pure and uncorrupted text; a text which was more complete and perfect, and also more useful than any that hath been hitherto published in that kind."[82] The idea behind the Polyglot Bible was to allow comparison between the vernacular and original text in order to aid understanding of the message and therefore drive the doubt of authenticity from the mind of the reader. More than interpretive devices though, Polyglot Bibles were especially popular in the late-sixteenth to early-seventeenth centuries, and were viewed as tools which could restore Christianity to a 'pure and uncorrupted' religion:

> Just as God began the history of human society by over-turning the Tower of Babel, confusing languages and scattering people, and the Incarnation provided a means for their ingathering in the Church, so the making of a Polyglot marked a sort of second coming, reversing the direction of time's arrow, and implying the restoration of all that had worked to destroy the unity of mankind in the intervening millennium and a half.[83]

Walton hoped that displaying the different texts side-by-side would highlight the mistakes which had crept in over time, allowing the reader to see the original, and what he hoped to be the 'true' text. Comparison did not threaten the text, rather it allowed for its repair. For those not well versed in the ancient languages, Walton commissioned and produced study books to aid the general reader with translation.[84] However, although his intention was to unveil biblical Scripture and make it accessible to everyone, the London Polyglot Bible was an expensive project, which meant that the average English person simply could not afford to buy it: it was accessible only to the rich. The incorporation of so many languages also meant that the person reading it would require knowledge of some somewhat obscure languages, which was unlikely to be the case even for those with a classical education.

The increasing availability and awareness of the Bible in the seventeenth-century meant it was used much more often in the political arena. Killeen asserts that typological readings

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[81] Miller, *The "Antiquarianisation" of Biblical Scholarship*, p. 467.
[82] Ibid, pp. 469-471.
[83] Ibid, p. 466.
[84] Ibid, p. 475.

of Old Testament figures Rehoboam and Jeroboam were continually used "both as a model for chastising rebellion and, in other hands, the primary mandate for and language of protest."[85] Catholics and Protestants, rich and poor, used these figures in their arguments for or against the system. The political situation during the seventeenth century was tumultuous at best and the use of religious stories and language reflected that. John Price, an English classical scholar and ardent Catholic, compared the strife between Rehoboam and Jeroboam to the civil war, noting "the deadly feude alwayes after between *Rehoboam* and *Jeroboam* (as is now between the Royallists and Parliamenteers)."[86] Killeen argues that such references to two obscure Old Testament kings, as well as the almost continuous retelling of the stories of biblical figures like Abraham and Jacob (used as a cautionary tale) showed a culture that was accustomed to the "nuances of biblical interpretation."[87] Hill gives further evidence for the widespread use of biblical figures as allegory in the political arena, discussing Adam both as the representative of all humanity (i.e. all mankind are sinful not just because we are Adam's heirs, but because he was our representative, for whom we must take responsibility), and as the symbol of pride and "imaginary power in the flesh." Adam was whatever the politicians – or indeed "everyman" – needed him to be. Hill also argues that in the mid-seventeenth century, 'traditional' renditions of biblical myths became radicalised; Abel and Jacob for example, were used to represent the common people and Cain and Esau became symbols of the oppression faced by the lower classes. He concludes that this radicalisation of the traditional indicated that social groups outside the norm (i.e. the lower classes) were able to access the printing world, and to have their views and writings published.[88]

Apart from the massive theological implications of translating the Bible into the vernacular, the ensuing questions of authority and authenticity and the continuous use of biblical allegory in political fields, the influence of the Bible also extended into the arena of seventeenth-century entertainment. Popular ballads, epic poems, songs and stories concerning biblical narratives emerged over the course of the century. In 1678, John Bunyan wrote arguably the most famous Christian allegory of the time, *The Pilgrim's Progress* which was, as Daniell asserts, "made of Scripture."[89] In 1664, Milton published

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[85] K. Killeen, 'Chastising with Scorpions: Reading the Old Testament in Early Modern England.' *Huntington Library Quarterly.* Vol. 73, Issue 3, 2010, p. 498.

[86] J. Price, *The cloudie clergie; or, A mourning lecture for our morning lecturers; intended for a weekly antidote against the daily infection of those London preachers, who de die in diem do corrupt the judgements of their seduced auditors,* London, 1650, p. 12.

[87] Killeen, *Chastising with Scorpions*, p. 503.

[88] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, pp. 201-245.

[89] Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 484.

his own epic-poem *Paradise Lost*, which was filled with biblical allegory. Daniell notes that it was in the later part of the seventeenth century that the genre of "character writing" emerged; a genre which drew influence from the Wisdom Books of Apocrypha and the Gospels.[90] The trend of using biblical narrative in both literature and entertainment reflected the rising use of, and increasing access to, the Bible.[91]

It is clear from the above that the Bible was increasingly turned to as a source of inspiration for art, literature and drama. Part of the reason behind that was its accessibility to the laypeople, to people who before would have relied on hearing the Word through clergymen or priests, not through their own eyes. This newfound freedom to read Scripture would have led to a wealth of interpretations, built upon pre-existing interpretations brought about by the Church and biblical art. It is into this category Hollar's etchings fall, and Chapter Two specifically looks at the interpretation of the subject matter both by Hollar, and by his audience.

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[90] Ibid, pp. 465-484.
[91] For more information on the use of biblical narratives and figures in literature etc., see: Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, pp. 335-396.

III. Chapter Two: On the *Abraham* Series

5. Introduction to the Series

In the beginning of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, there was Abraham. Or rather, Abram. The figure from whom the three largest monotheistic traditions were born is the original Patriarch and therefore one of the most important figures in biblical Scripture. Renamed by his God YHWH after sealing a covenant (Genesis 17:5), Abraham is – for many, including St. Paul – the epitome of faithfulness, loyalty and trust in the Divine. Scriptural understanding in the seventeenth century viewed him no differently. The embodiment of what it meant to serve God, Abraham's narrative was also used to understand aspects of social and cultural events throughout the seventeenth century, and in particular, during the 1640s. The Abrahamic covenant (along with other Old Testament covenants) was the basis for discussion in the Protestant Reformed traditions of Covenant theology on one hand, and figured heavily in Hobbes' thesis of Social Contract theory on the other hand. Both of these ideologies will be discussed over the course of Chapter Two, especially in the context of the close reading of the panels in section five. Chapter Two is divided into six sections. After this introduction, section six discusses the possible reasons why Hollar chose to etch the Abraham narrative, looking at the 'use' of Abraham in the seventeenth century, the religious and political events associated with the story, and the ways in which the narrative was interpreted by those approaching the Bible by themselves for the first time. Attention is then given over to a discussion of themes in the narrative, and use of literary devices – in this case, the chiastic structure which is prevalent in the Abraham story. The final section is a close reading of the individual panels, with focus on content, subject, format and possible interpretations.

6. Choosing Abraham

The first chapter was concerned with setting the context, both historically, politically and artistically so that the *Abraham* etching can be fully understood and interpreted against a seventeenth-century background. This section offers a brief introduction to the series, and focuses on the reasons behind Hollar's choice of Abraham, before turning to an analysis of each panel. However, prior to such close examination, consideration must be given over to the importance of the Abraham narrative in the time and culture in which it was produced. Due to time constraints and word restrictions, the *Jacob* series which was introduced in the introduction to this work will not be as closely examined, but there is a short section in Chapter Three which discusses that work, in particular as a comparison to the *Abraham* series. To that end, this section also includes a short description of the use of Jacob & Joseph in the seventeenth century to aid comparison in Chapter Three.

Both the *Abraham* and the *Jacob* etchings are untitled, undated and unsigned. Owing to the amount of work produced by Hollar over his career, it is impossible to pinpoint when the etchings were produced. However, it is possible to determine in which period they are *most likely* to have been produced by considering the following factors: the purpose of the etchings; Hollar's working relationships with specific publishers; the choice of narratives in relation to the political landscape; and the popularity of the subject in art and culture at that time. By roughly dating the etchings, the role of the patriarchal figures can be understood both from a seventeenth-century situation and religious stance. At this point it is worth noting that there is no secondary material (that we know of) specifically on the *Abraham* series, other than the catalogue note in Pennington's volume. Thus, the remainder of this work is original, exploring the etchings in the context of the historical, political and religious situations of the time in which the etchings were probably created, with a degree of conjecture and theoretical assumptions.[92]

As seen above, Pennington suggests that these prints were most likely produced as cheap, visual aids for Bible readers, meant either to be cut up and stuck in to personal Bibles as a means of illustration, or to be used as a cheap and alternative way of decorating walls.[93] The grid-like format of the etchings supports this suggestion as each of the panels is clearly marked by a border, and annotated above to indicate the biblical story to which the panel

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[92] While this section is wholly the idea of the author, thanks are due to Peter Black, Curator of The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, for his direction and guidance in October 2013.
[93] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 3.

relates. This format more or less instructed viewers where to attach the images in their Bibles. Coelen also provides evidence that this was common practice during the mid-seventeenth century,[94] and the fact that very few of the prints survive suggests either that very few were produced in the first place, or (more likely), that they were so widely available and used as cut-and-stick illustrations that their owners did not take great care of them and most were lost. [95] Working from the assumption that the images were meant as Bible illustrations, there are a number of reasons to suppose that the images were first produced in Hollar's Antwerp years, between 1644 and 1652. Firstly, the etchings were initially annotated in Latin. Catalogues of Hollar's work note that these etchings appear in three states; the first state (i) had Latin inscriptions and annotations; in the second state (ii) these were changed to English; in the third state (iii), the illustrations included additional information printed at the bottom.[96] Given that by the mid-seventeenth century the majority of printers in England were only printing texts in English, it is unlikely Hollar would have printed a Latin version for the English market. However as Antwerp was still a major Catholic hub at this point, printing the etchings using Latin annotations would have made sense; in contrast to England. Hollar's original target market would have been familiar with the Latin language, and the Council of Trent had required that the Bible be made available only in the Latin, Vulgate version. The fact that the prints were later produced in English suggests Hollar (or somebody else) re-etched the wording upon his return to London in order to sell the plates to English printers.

Secondly, Green has found clear evidence that during the second half of the seventeenth century illustrations for Bibles gained popularity and dramatically increased in number, arguing that this resulted from an increase for the demand for visual aids as well as a return to a more moralistic reading of Scripture.[97] Coelen notes that a similar trend can be seen in the Netherlands and Germany where publishers were producing 'Picture Bibles' which differed to illustrated Bibles in that they presented Scripture in pictorial form, and contained little to no text.[98] Hollar was a prolific drafter but he did not waste his time creating images which would not have sold; indeed, his incredibly varied catalogue of work attests to the fact he was driven by what was popular at the time. Similar images in the same format exist in folios by artists from the Netherlands and the surrounding area

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[94] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, pp. 44-58.
[95] For a record of other surviving copies of the *Abraham* series, see above, Introduction, p. 9, footnote 1. Thanks are again due to Peter Black for information regarding the purpose of the etching.
[96] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 3.
[97] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 105-166.
[98] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 58; L. Grove, conversation, August 2014.

such as, for example, Pieter Hendricksz' *8 Scenes from Genesis*.[99] However, there are fewer examples in England. This also suggests that Hollar was exposed to such images in Antwerp which led him to create his own set of etchings during those years, and that on his return to England, he was able to sell the plates on to a printer, most likely John Ogilby, a central figure in publishing such biblical illustrations and visual aids in London.[100] However, Hollar is known to have had a well-established working relationship with both Ogilby and William Dugdale and either man might have taken on the print sets for publishing and selling.[101] The subject matter of the etchings also suggests that they were created after the mid-1640s. As will be discussed below, the decision to concentrate on Abraham and the story of the Covenant may well have reflected the recent *Solemn League and Covenant*, an agreement between the English Parliamentarians and Scottish Covenanters drafted early in the First English Civil War which "was designed not only to be a military alliance against Charles I" but also to be "an encouragement to the Christian churches groaning under or in danger of the yoke of Antichrist" to join in a struggle for liberation.[102] As noted above, Hollar etched the frontispiece for *The Solemn League and Covenant,* so would have been aware that the theme of covenant had re-entered national consciousness. Likewise, the Jacob narrative represented matters which were also in the political consciousness in both England and Scotland, including questions concerning birth-rights, inheritance laws and instruction on the 'correct' way to show allegiance to God.[103] The popularity of these subjects in the political field was echoed in the art world. The mid-to-late seventeenth century was full of works dedicated to similar subject matter, and Hollar probably followed that trend in an effort to increase his reputation and income.[104] The reasons he chose to depict Abraham and Jacob were twofold. Firstly this theme was a reflection on the current political themes which guaranteed interest in the etchings, and secondly he was following a trend which was fairly prevalent in Antwerp, but less popular in England.[105] While New Testament images remained the most popular

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[99] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, pp. 45-59.

[100] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 166.

[101] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. xxxiv-xliii.

[102] C. Hill, 'The Bible in Seventeenth-Century Politics. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, pp. 87-107, University of Michigan: Michigan, 1991, pp. 92-93.

[103] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, 1993, pp. 204-209.

[104] See: van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets* for examples of similar etchings from the Netherlands, Germany and the Lowlands; M Brion & H Heinmann, *The Bible in Art Miniatures, Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures Inspired by The Old Testament*, London: Phaidon Press, 1956 for examples of religious imagery concerning Old Testament figures from a similar period; Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, especially pp. 11-39 for examples of images concerning morality and politics with references to biblical characters.

[105] See: van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, pp. 44-46; 58-59; 69-98, for several examples of prints on these subjects which printed for the market in Antwerp and the surrounding country.

biblical pictures, there was a definite increase in Old Testament images and interestingly, the majority of those pictures were based on stories from Genesis, with the occasional reference to the Prophets. Hollar was, therefore, not revolutionary in his subject choice, but he was probably one of the first artists to bring that European theme to London in the 1650s, and he was able to do that because of the contemporary political situation.

7. Themes in the Abraham Cycle

Scholars agree that there are three main themes evident in the Abraham narratives: Promise, Land and Son.[106] Promise also reads as 'blessing' or 'covenant' in that God blessed Abraham by creating his Promise or Covenant with him. Abela notes the progression of the blessing, moving from a promise placing the emphasis of blessing solely on Abram's actions, to a promise where all the sons of Abram are participants through the condition of circumcision, and Abela argues that "the vague promises of blessing made by *Yhwh* at the beginning of the Abraham narrative […] find their concrete realisation during the story."[107] He concludes that the theme of blessing is continued post-narrative as Abraham becomes a "source of blessing" to other and enables them to – as previously noted – become a part of the promise.[108] The theme of Covenant has been discussed in the previous section, and its importance and prevalence during the seventeenth century cannot be underestimated. In the Old Testament context, it is the building block for monotheism, and Hollar's *Abraham* series depicts the most important aspects of the covenant narrative: the original order from God to leave his country (Genesis 12:1-3); the 'first' covenant (15:7-21); and the 'second' covenant (or the reiteration of the original covenant with the introduction of conditions) occurring in chapter 17:2-14. Many also read Genesis 22 (the Akedah, or Sacrifice of Isaac) as a symbol of the lengths Abraham was willing to go in

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[106] For examples, see: T. D. Alexander, 'Abraham Re-Assessed Theologically: The Abraham Narrative and the New Testament Understanding of Justification by Faith', in: R. S. Hessen P. E. Sattherthwaite, G. J. Wenham (eds.), *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12-50,* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2nd Edition, 1994, pp. 7-28
[107] A. Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative: Thematic Coherence within the Abraham Literary Unit of Genesis 11, 27-25, 18,* Studia Editions: Malta, 1989, pp. 18-32.
[108] Ibid, p. 32.

order to protect his contract with God, therefore it can be seen as a reaffirmation of the promise made between God and Abraham.[109]

The second theme is that of 'Land.' This too, is a weighty topic in Hollar's time, and breaks down in to the smaller issues of primogeniture, 'rightful' inheritance, emigration and subsequently the introduction of the foreign; specifically those foreign religions of Middle Eastern and Asian origin. This last theme in particular becomes crucial if considered alongside Genesis 21:10-21 where Abraham casts out Hagar and Ishmael in to the wilderness. In this narrative, God promises Abraham "As for the son of the slave-woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring" (21:13). Ishmael grows up in the wilderness of Paran and later marries a woman of Egyptian descent, thus introducing foreign blood in to the family line. Ishmael is later understood to be a Prophet and ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam and is therefore credited as being a central figure in the foundation of the religion.

The action of Abraham becomes symbolic of the foundation of two opposing monotheistic religions, and when questions over Islam began to arise in the 1600s, Genesis 21 was probably very closely read and scrutinised in the search for answers. When an English translation of the Qur'an appeared in London in 1649, entitled *The Alcoran of Mahomet* and translated from the French *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* by Alexander Ross who was chaplain to Charles I, it altered biblical Scripture by claiming that Abraham had taken Hagar and Ishmael to Mecca, thus lending authority to Mecca as a sanctified place in Islam.[110] This was an alternative version of Abraham casting Hagar and Ishmael out in to the wilderness, and it also credits Abraham for building the Kaaba.[111] Perhaps most significantly, the version of the Sacrifice of Isaac which appears in the Qur'an does not name Isaac as the sacrifice. In the Qur'an, there is some ambiguity as to who the son chosen for sacrifice was. However both the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible interpret the sacrifice as a test of faith issued by God.[112] The theme of the religious 'Other' in the Abraham narrative also touches upon the issue of emigration and therefore the overarching theme of Land:

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[109] For further reading on the theme of Promise or Covenant, see: Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, pp. 15-33; Clines, D.J.A., *The Theme of the Pentateuch,* Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1978; Fewell, D.N., & David M. Gunn. *Gender, Power, & Promise.* Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1993, pp. 39-55.

[110] R. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*, State University of New York Press: New York, 1990, p. 68.

[111] Ibid, p. 149.

[112] This is in reference to Qur'an Ch. 37:102-108.

> For us, the land theme denotes the relationship of the main character, Abraham, to the spatial dimension of the Abraham narrative, both as the concrete environment wherein the plot evolves and also as the future physical concretisation of the leitmotif of the divine promise.[113]

Abela here notes the twofold purpose of the theme of Land, and as will be seen below, Hollar illustrates both purposes very well in his *Abraham* illustrations, depicting the physical environment and continuously emphasising the promise of land to Abraham. Land was a hot topic in England during the seventeenth century, reflecting both the ideology of the English as the 'Chosen' people (and therefore England as the chosen land), and the discovery of new lands to the west, namely America, and the ensuing patterns of emigration which emerged during that century.

The theme of emigration and exile continues as Carr and Conway suggest that stories of Abraham were first used during the Babylonian exile (between 597 – 582 BCE) as a way to encourage hope within the exiles. Abraham was a symbol of God's promise to his people and represented the idea that those who were powerless and without a home could still succeed and indeed, thrive:

> It was when the Judean exiles themselves lacked a land and felt themselves cursed that they talked about Abraham and referred ever more often to God's promise to him […] They focused less on the history of the monarchy and, instead, emphasised stories about their history before entering the land […] this kind of transfer of themes from a past governmental context (in this case, the monarchy) to a new, non-governmental context (in this case, the life of an emigrant) is typical for people undergoing exile.[114]

While not in exile, the situation was probably similar for those emigrating to the New World, and to a brand new experience and landscape, and a clean slate. It was also probably a recurring theme in the Interregnum – as the Commonwealth, as an interim period between monarchs, later came to be called – at a time when Parliamentarians in particular felt the need to justify their position in England, drawing on Scripture and history rather than their traditional relationship with the Monarchy. However this is pure conjecture. The theme of Land was prevalent throughout the seventeenth century and reflected in the choice of illustrations chosen to depict the *Abraham* series. While not as relevant to this section, the theme of land also served to highlight issues of primogeniture and inheritance raised in the seventeenth century. However these topics feature more in the Jacob narrative, and less so in Abraham.

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[113] Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, p. 81.
[114] D. M. Carr & C. M. Conway, *An Introduction to the Bible: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts*, Wiley-Blackwell: West Sussex, 2010, pp. 165-166.

The final key theme of 'Son' is central to the Abraham narrative in Genesis and as such plays a predominant part in the *Abraham* imagery. The majority of commentaries on Genesis note the theme of progeny beginning in Genesis 11:27-32 and then incorporated throughout the narrative, appearing in 12:1-3, 13:14-18, 15:1-21, 16:1-16, Chapters 17-19 inclusively and Chapters 21 and 22 respectively. The theme of Son is often intertwined with the theme of land, the basis of God's covenant with Abraham and the reward for Abraham proving his devotion. However the promise is not without difficulty, not least because Abraham is forced to wait many childless years before the promise of progeny is fulfilled. Since Sarah remains barren, she gives to him her handmaiden Hagar who bears Ishmael which means 'God will Hear.' The naming of Ishmael indicates God has not abandoned Abraham nor their covenant, but is still listening to his prayers and answering them by (finally) delivering a son. The theme of Son is continued with the birth of Isaac to Sarah and the fulfilment of God's promise has begun. However, as previously discussed, the strained relationship between Sarah and Hagar results in the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness (Genesis 21:14-21), the decisive split between the progeny of Abraham, who go their separate ways, never to come together as brothers again. While Isaac is cast as the true heir to Abraham's promise, Ishmael is not forgotten and is also promised multiple generations (see Genesis 17:20, 21:18). In this way, Ishmael becomes the representation of 'other' nations set apart from Isaac's lineage.[115]

It is this representation of the 'other' which proves interesting to those reading the Bible for themselves for the first time in the seventeenth century. The introduction of the Qur'an in English meant people were aware of another monotheistic tradition in which Abraham was a pivotal figure, and in which Ishmael was given a much higher status than in biblical narrative. As previously indicated in this section, the Sacrifice of Isaac became contentious for those studying both the Bible and the Qur'an. The Qur'anic version of the narrative does not specify Isaac as being the chosen sacrifice – rather it does not specifically mention either son:

> When he was old enough to go about with him, he said: "O my son, I dreamt that I was sacrificing you. Consider, what you think?" He replied: "Father, do as you are commanded. If God pleases you will find me firm." When they submitted to the will of God, and (Abraham) laid (his son) down prostrate on his temple, we called out: "O Abraham, you have fulfilled your dream." Thus do we reward the good.

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[115] H. Kessler & D. Nirenberg, *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Pennsylvania, 2011, p. 111.

> That was indeed a trying test, so we ransomed him for a great sacrifice, and left (his hallowed memory) for posterity.

<div align="right">Qur'an Ch. 37: 102-108</div>

This very different account of a well-known Judeo-Christian text caused questions of authenticity and authority to arise, as noted in Chapter One. The Qur'anic text also gives the son a voice, suggesting a conversation took place between Abraham and the son, and that the son was both aware of the situation and was a willing participant in the plan from the offset.[116] This is obviously in stark contrast to the biblical version in which Isaac is not given a voice or a choice, and is completely unaware of the circumstances surrounding the trip which he undertakes with his father. The story of the Sacrifice of Isaac was often read (by the Church) as a precursor to the coming of Christianity as similarities were drawn between Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice and Jesus carrying the Cross. Isaac was intended as a sacrifice to satisfy God of Abraham's devotion while Jesus was sacrificed to cleanse humanity of their sins and this help them remain participants in the Abraham covenant with God (continuing as the Sons of Abraham). Thus the introduction of an alien text which suggested an alternative interaction between God, Abraham and 'Son' probably caused much debate and renewed exegesis of the biblical text. The theme of Son is critical to the Abrahamic narrative and has been used in debates across Christianity, not least during the Reformation when clashing Protestants and Catholics used the texts to determine important creeds and policies for their respective groups.[117] This, in conjunction with the promise of and the overall theme of Covenant is displayed throughout Hollar's etching series and shows the relevance of the text to its viewers in the seventeenth century.

8. Depicting Chiasm in Images

Besides both the overarching and the lesser themes outlined above, the biblical narrative of Abraham also employs various literary devices in order to enhance and emphasise certain passaged and therefore certain messages and moral topics. It is well known that the Abraham cycle follows a chiastic structure. That is, "there are a series of correspondences between different parts […] where themes introduced at the outset of a narrative are

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[116] As noted by Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands*, p. 84.
[117] See: G. R. Evans, "Scriptural Interpretation in Pre-Reformation Dissident Movements," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation,* ed. M. Saebo (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), pp. 295-318.

resumed in reverse order in its second half."[118] A central aim of this chapter is therefore to discuss whether or not Hollar has depicted this chiasm in his panels. The point of employing such a device, it is argued, is to emphasise the central point of a story and highlight the main argument or theme, and to "articulate balance or order within a text."[119] In the Abraham narrative, that central point is the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness which occurs in Genesis 16: 1-14. The pattern in scripture is as follows:

a. Prologue (11.28-30)

    b. First challenge: call for Abraham to leave family of origin (12:1-3)

        c. Wife-sister story (12:10-13:1)

            d. Separation from Lot (13:2-18)

                e. Covenant of pieces with Abraham (14-15)

                    f. **Hagar-Ishmael story (Gen 16:1-14)**

                e. Covenant of circumcision with Abraham (17)

            d. Hospitality/progeny episodes; Abraham contrasted with Lot (18-19)

        c. Wife-sister story (20)

    b. Final challenge: calls for Abraham to let go of family of future (21.8-21 and 22.1-19)

a. Epilogue 22.20-24

Table 2-1: *Chiastic Structure of the Abraham Narrative.*[120]

Abela notes the emphasis on the Hagar story in his conclusive paragraph on the blessing theme and also highlights the theme of hospitality which is repeatedly used in the Abraham narrative.[121] On first viewing, Hollar's series follows a similar pattern, omitting only the prologue and with the addition of the story of Rebekah (Genesis 24).[122] As we proceed throughout the panels, this structure will be kept in mind to determine if the use of a chiastic device can be depicted in visual art. It is probably unlikely that Hollar was aware of the chiastic arrangement in the Abraham narrative; nonetheless, we will see if he inadvertently chose to portray parts of the narrative which correspond with the narratives shown in Table 2-1.

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[118] NRSV Oxford Annotated Bible, p. 38.
[119] See: Anon., "Chiasmus" in http://literarydevices.net/chiasmus.
[120] NRSV Oxford Annotated Bible, p. 38.
[121] Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, p. 32-33.
[122] See Fig 6.1 in Appendix A for a visual representation of Hollar's panels following the chiastic structure.

Note on the Sequence of the Panels

Hollar's *Abraham* series begins at Genesis 12:1 and, sixteen panels later, ends at Genesis 24:26. The Panels in State iii are captioned as follows:

1. God Calleth Abraham. Gen.12.1&c.
2. Canaan is promised to Abraham. Gen.12.6
3. Pharaoh restores Abraham his Wife. Gen 12.19
4. Abraham and Lot separate. Gen. 13.7&c.
5. Abraham pursues ye Kings & beats them. Gen.14.3&c.
6. Melchizedek brings forth Bread & Wine to Abraham. Gen 14.18
7. God promises Abraham a numerous offspring. Gen 15.5
8. Sarah complains that Hagar despises her. Gen 16.4
9. God reneweth his Covenant with Abraham. Gen 17.4&c.
10. Abraham entertains three Angels. Gen 18.3 .&c.
11. Lot and his family depart from Sodom. Gen.19.15&c.
12. Abimelech rebuketh Abraham. Gen 20.9
13. Abraham's Feast when Isaac was weaned. Gen.21.8
14. Abraham going to offer Isaac. Gen.22
15. Abraham sends his servant to take a Wife for Isaac. Gen.24
16. Abraham's Servant departs with Rebekah. Gen.24.16

The first thing to note is the difference between States. This has already been discussed above, but it is worth noting the visual differences between the states. The panels labelled in English are categorised as State ii, meaning they have been translated from the original Latin in to English.[123] However the original Latin versions (State i) of the panels differ from State ii in that they were not annotated with a caption, but give only a reference to a Bible chapter and verse (see Fig. 2.1). The addition of more detailed inscriptions, then, is for the English-reading population. The second point of note is the possibility that the English additions were not made with Hollar's hand. Hollar's handwriting is quite

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[123] As observed above, part of the context of Hollar's work would have been the stipulation by the Council of Trent that Catholics were only supposed to own scriptures in Latin (the Vulgate), and not in the vernacular. It is unclear whether Hollar took the Latin captions if his etchings directly from the Vulgate. This study is not based on State i of the etchings which incorporates the Latin text, so it does not consider this question. However it is a topic worth further study.

Fig 2.1: *Panel 1 of the Abraham sheet* (State i) with Latin caption.

distinctive and easily identifiable from his other works, but the wording in the later States of the Abraham prints is dissimilar and less professional than his usual style. It would not have been unusual for this to happen; if Hollar had sold the plates on to an English printer, they were within their rights to amend or append changes without seeking prior permission. The sequence of the panels is true to the text and no great changes have been introduced concerning narrative pattern. That being said, the choice of which specific narratives to incorporate into his series is important and may reveal how those texts were interpreted in Hollar's period. To that end, this chapter will focus on individual panels in the original sequence with English captions (i.e. State iii). It will incorporate a brief description of the content of the panel before a full analysis of that content, with emphasis on the meaning of the biblical text how it was used and understood in seventeenth century culture. Chapter Three will read the sequence as whole before comparing this series of etchings with similar works by Hollar and his contemporaries and influences, concluding with an examination of the relationship between text and image in the sequence.

Fig 2.2: Panel 1, *God Calleth Abraham.*

The very first panel of the series, **Panel 1: *God Calleth Abraham. Gen: 12.1.2 &c.*** (Fig 2.2) is the beginning of the covenant narrative and a symbol of Abram's close relationship with God. Hollar refers to the character as Abraham when at this point in biblical Scripture, he is still named Abram; the renaming of Abram occurs in Genesis 17:5 as a sign of the covenant. The same also applies to Sarah, who is named Sarai prior to the sealing of the Covenant. This is an odd move by the scribe and suggests they were either unfamiliar with the Abraham story and the highly symbolic renaming ritual and mark of the covenant, or that they were already alluding to the forthcoming promise, emphasising Abram's faithfulness and close relationship with the Divine. It also draws on the assumption that viewers were familiar enough with the Abraham narrative and could – for themselves – recall the ritual of the name-change. The image depicts Abram in a kneeling position with his hand outstretched to the sky where a voice appears out of the clouds demanding "*Get thee out of thy Country &c.*" The voice is preceded by what is supposedly the Tetragrammaton but it has been crudely or mistakenly copied: the Hebrew letters

should read יהוה (YHWH) but instead appear to read דחדח (DCHDCH). This is a mistake which occurs elsewhere in Hollar's work, and also in four other panels in this work (panels 2, 4, 7 and 9), and is also a common problem in other images of the same period; it is most likely a result of a lack of familiarity with Hebrew text and the absence of a translator who could help.[124] Rodov states that the first introduction of the Tetragrammaton in book illustrations occurred in Germany and the surrounding lowlands in the 1530s: "The Hebrew Tetragrammaton written within a halo or shining sun […] intended as an alternative to the three-letter Latin Christogram IHS" appeared in Protestant art to begin with, inspired by the Reformist revision of the "Trinitarian concept and subsequent interdiction of representing God in human form."[125] The Tetragrammaton here appears out of the clouds in the fashion of a sunbeam, bearing down onto the shoulder and chest of Abram, who receives the command with open arms: a sign of utter loyalty and acceptance. In the scene, Abram kneels on a slightly elevated rolling hill, above the rest of the landscape which is kept simple and clean in order to keep the focus on the human-divine relationship. In the background, unidentified figures lead a group of animals – camels, sheep and donkeys among them – out of the frame. These are presumably Abram's servants.

Panel 1 becomes more effective when viewed with its partner, Panel 2: *Canaan is promised to Abraham Gen 12.6.* (Fig 2.3). Together, these two panels represent the first covenant between YHWH and Abram, one which is unconditional and which also binds Abram's descendants into the promise. The panels are very similar to each other, both showing the kneeling Abram receiving YHWH's words in a gentle yet sparse landscape. Moreover, viewing the two panels together reveals a Hobbesian influence in Hollar's series: the importance of a covenantal conversation between YHWH and Abram, and the true origin of the Kingdom of God. Hobbes claimed that: "at the making of this Covenant, God spake onely to Abraham; and therefore contracted not with any of his family, or seed, otherwise then as their wills."[126] The notion of a conversation between God and Abraham was important to Hobbes because it identified Abram as God's chosen leader of nations, and therefore rightful sovereign of God's power on earth:

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[124] There is no evidence in any of Hollar's biographies to suggest he was learned in Hebrew, nor are there any noted connections with people who could speak or write Hebrew.
[125] I. Rodov, *"Script in Christian Art."* In: Khan, G. et al (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, Brill Publishing: Leiden, 2013, p. 8.
[126] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil.* 1651, Andrew Cooke: London, pp. 290-291.

> For God spake onely to Abraham; and it was he onely, that was able to know what God said, and to interpret the same to his family: And therefore also, they that have the place of Abraham in a Common-wealth, are the onely Interpreters of what God hath spoken.[127]

Hollar's panels reflects this: the reverse-imagery used in the panels creates the idea of a conversation between Abram and YHWH. Although the reader sees only God's verbal instructions and promise, familiarity with the text would have ensured the reader could fill in the blanks of their own accord, as if acting out Abram's response themselves.

Fig 2.2: Panel 1, *God Calleth Abraham.*   Fig 2.3: Panel 2, *Canaan is promised to Abraham.*

The reference to Scripture in the captions, "*Gen 12.1.2 &c.*" and "*Gen 12.6,*" is an explicit reference to the first part of the covenantal conversation between YHWH and Abram, wherein YHWH promises Abram that he will *"make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great."* The unconditional promise binds Abram's descendants into the contract and posits Abram at the head of this family, in keeping with Hobbes' theory.

However the promise of land seen in the second panel is in fact from Genesis 12:7, not verse six, as indicated by the script in the header, which contains a reference to part of the journey made by Abram, specifically his entry into land belonging to the Canaanites. This will become significant when we consider the theme of emigration prevalent in the seventeenth century. The promise of land emphasises firstly that the contract binds Abram's progeny as well as himself, and secondly that they are to be given land. It is the first signal that the covenant is of an eternal nature, and is – at this point – unconditional. This is in stark contrast to the Adamic covenant, which Hobbes noted was only ever between God and Adam and introduced the concept of punishment, pain and isolation from

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[127] Ibid, p. 291.

God. The Adamic covenant also emphasised that Adam's descendants were held to account for their own actions: "And afterwards God punished his [Adam's] posterity, for their vices, all but eight persons, with an universall deluge."[128] Hobbes instead places Abram at the head of the familial state, one in which his offspring are intertwined in the covenant because of Abram's sovereignty and role as father. An earlier work by Hobbes clarifies:

> For although God was their king both by *nature* and by the *Agreement* with *Abraham,* they nevertheless owed him only natural obedience and natural worship, as his subjects, but the religious worship which *Abraham, Isaac* or *Jacob,* their natural Princes. For the only *Word of God* that they had received was the natural word of right *reason,* and there was no *agreement* between God and themselves except in so far as their wills were included in the will of *Abraham,* as their Prince.[129]

This understanding of the covenant was popular with Royalists and meant the Abraham cycle was regarded as the origin of the Kingdom of God and the foundation for humanity's relationship with the divine. It conflicted with the Protestant Reformist idea of covenant, which was categorised into three distinguished areas: covenant of works, grace and redemption. The Reformers placed a heavy emphasis on the role of Adam as the father of all mankind, and argued that all of the subsequent covenants in the Old Testament stemmed from Genesis 3:15 which promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's had. This was interpreted as a promise that Adam's lineage would continue and that God would put himself between humanity and Satan forevermore. Many Reformers read Genesis 3:15 as an indicator that a human would be wounded in the process of destroying Satan, ("He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel") and as such it was often

Fig 2.4: *Satterday, Gen: 1* (Date and State unknown).

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[128] Ibid, p. 216.
[129] T. Hobbes, *Elementa philosophica de cive,* 1657, p. 191.

referred to as the 'Proto-Gospel' or first Gospel.[130] However Hollar's work clearly shows his preference for Abraham as the 'Father' of nations over Adam, and this is reflected in other examples of his biblical illustrations. In fact, although there are few images of Adam or Eve in Hollar's repertoire, the few that do exist all posit Adam as being quite equal to the rest of the animal kingdom. The one distinguishing feature Hollar does acknowledge is humanity's ability to converse. *Satterday: Gen* 1 (Fig 2.4) is part of a series depicting the Seven Days of Creation shows Adam side-by-side with a range of exotic looking animals. In the background, Adam appears with Eve next to his side yet still reclining on the ground, a part of the earth. Here, Adam is part of Creation but not the leader of living things that Abram is later bound to become. This vision of Adam is further emphasised by another of Hollar's prints: *Creation of Man and Beast* (Fig. 2.5).

Fig 2.5: *Creation of Man and Beast,* Date unknown (State ii).

This striking image is quite different to other biblical illustrations by Hollar in that it is etched in the format of a map, showing the creation of living things read from left to right. The centre of the image shows a lake or pond, clearly pointing to the concept of water as the source of all life. Adam is made after the animals, and Eve comes even further along the 'map.' Further along, Hollar depicts the infamous tree of forbidden fruit, or as he labels it, the *Forbidden Tree*. These two images of Adam show him in an earthy, natural state, someone who is at one with nature and of equal stature in the animal kingdom. This image contrasts starkly with the depictions of Abraham who is always drawn upright, fully

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[130] J. H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation,* InterVarsity Press: Illinois, 2001, p. 587.

clothed and in the position of a leader, both of humans and animals. This is clear in Panels 1 and 2 of the *Abraham* series. He is frequently depicted with servants around him and animals are cast as objects to Abram in Hollar's works. Abram is the Father and Leader of nations. If the *Abraham* etchings were created in the late 1640s-early 1650s, they coincide with the publishing time of Hobbes' *Leviathan* (English version) in 1651 which propagates these ideas of Abram as Leader. There is no evidence that Hollar knew Hobbes or had read his work;[131] however *Leviathan* was popular among Royalists for its views on absolute monarchy and the right of the Sovereign to control affairs of the religion and state.[132] Etched by Abraham Bosse and published by an Amsterdam publishers, Hollar could have had access to the work during his time in Antwerp; however again, this is conjecture and there is no supporting evidence for this. There is a vague connection between Hollar and Bosse as Pennington notes that several of Hollar's etchings are copies of Bosse's etchings, and so Bosse was known to Hollar.[133] The Hobbesian influence and suggestion of Abram as a leader, and the conversation between Abram and YHWH surface over the rest of the panels.

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[131] One connection between the two, noted by M. Bath, was that several etchings by Hollar (copies of the *Emblemata Horatiana* were used in "a work by the philosopher Thomas Hobbes" which was "Philosophica Rudiements", (1651). There is also some suggestion that Hollar etched the frontispiece for *Leviathan*. See: M. Bath, "Vaenius Abroad: English and Scottish Reception of the Emblemata Horatiana," in: B. Westerweel (ed.), *Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Field of the Emblem,* Brill: New York, 1997, pp. 87-99.

[132] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, p. 72.

[133] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. lxi.

Fig 2.6: Panel 3, *Pharaoh restores Abraham his Wife.*

Panel 3: *Pharaoh restores Abraham his Wife. Gen. 12. 19* continues the idea of
conversation though here it is not between YHWH and Abram but between the Pharaoh
and Abram. The direct exchange, "*Behold thy Wife, take her & go thy way*" reflects the
tone of command apparent in the first two panels. Geographically, panel 3 is the first to
move from a rural to an urban setting and shows Pharaoh giving a very submissive Sarai
back to Abram. Sarai is reaching both hands out to her husband whose appearance is
vaguely similar to a jester or trickster, perhaps emphasised by a pointed chin and tall,
pointed hat.[134] This is the first time we see Abram's clothes in any detail, and he appears to
be wearing a costume of rank or nobility. This perhaps accentuates his forthcoming role as
Father of Nations previously discussed. It is also worth noting that Abram's appearance is
inconsistent throughout the series, changing slightly through the use of different clothing
or facial features. This will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

Hollar chose to change his visualisation of speech in this panel; this time the speaker is
human (not YHWH) and the speech is encased in a wavy 'bubble.'[135] Any representation

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[134] This description of Abraham seems reminiscent of standardised medieval Christian portrayals of Jews.
Thanks are due to Dr. C. Methuen for this point.
[135] Chapter Three, Section Three discusses the use of the speech bubble in this series.

of a human speaking is characterised in this style throughout the series, whereas YHWH's speech is nearly always depicted as pointing directly to the listener, in a straight line emphasising the qualities of command and authority emanating from its speaker. Therefore the different use of speech bubbles reflects the status of the speaker and the content of the speech. The portrayal of the Pharaoh as a seventeenth century king exposes another theme prevalent in the seventeenth-century – that of absolute monarchy. The clothing of the Pharaoh is similar to Hollar's costume studies of the *Prince of Wales* and *A Duke* (see Fig 6.2 & 6.3 in Appendix A), and emphasises the concept of the Pharaoh as royalty. It also makes the role of this figure recognisable to the audience viewing the panels in the seventeenth century.

Although the concept of absolute monarchy was prevalent long before Hobbes, his work made it relevant again during the period in which Hollar worked. Hobbes believed that absolute monarchy was the best way to govern a country, and in *Leviathan* he emphasises the need to minimise discord and disorder within a society to ensure it remains healthy and secure. The best way to do this, Hobbes argues, is for the people to submit to one, absolute power, or central authority. Hollar captures this wonderfully, but not in the way one might think at first. Abram is clearly marked as the leader in this narrative and in the panel, because the Pharaoh is quick to give Abram back his wife for fear of creating discord or trouble in his land. God's favour lies with Abram and the Pharaoh recognises this because "the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai" (Genesis 12:17). He sends Abram and Sarai on their way, allowing them to take all their animals and servants with them with no punishment for Abram's deceit.

Fig 2.7: Panel 4, *Abraham and Lot Separate.*

Abram's ongoing conversation with YHWH is again depicted in the rather odd panel, Panel 4: *Abraham and Lot Separate* (Fig 2.7) However, it is much subtler than in the previous panels. The inscription at the top of the panel is a reference to the cause of the separation: "and there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and Perrizzites lived in the land" (Genesis 13:7). The 'et cetera' after the numbered verse invited the reader to read further in the story than just that one verse, and that is because the image itself actually depicts the story from Genesis 13:7 to 13:15. Once again, Hollar is relying on the audience having a previous knowledge of the text.

The image itself focuses on the two main characters separating. Abram turns his back on Lot and walks away to the left-hand side, while Lot reaches out his hand towards his uncle. In the background, each leader's party has started to divide and move away. The landscape is more dramatic than the previous three panels, as the hills rise to quite a height in the background. On the right-hand side is the outline of a city perched on a hill - presumably Sodom or Gomorrah. Lot and his men are moving towards the plains before the city – probably the plain of Jordan – while Abram is moving into the hills. Higher up still, an overhanging cliff has a figure standing on it, pointing in the direction of the city. The

Tetragrammaton appears above the figure, declaring: *"Ally (e) land which thou seest to thee I will give it."* There are two confusing points in this panel: firstly, the appearance of the unidentified man on the precipice, and secondly the direction in which he is pointing which is opposite to the way in which Abram travels. It is perhaps that the two main figures are the other way round – Lot is the one on the left moving towards the hills, Abram towards the right and the plain of Jordan. This would clearly contradict biblical scripture, however, because the narrative would not be correct in forthcoming scenes. Taken for granted that Abram is moving away to the hills and Lot to the plains then, one must ask why Abram has turned his back on his nephew. Biblical scripture clearly states that Abram gave Lot the choice in which direction to move, but his walking away can be construed as his making the first choice. Secondly, the unknown man on the hill is pointing towards the city. The identity of the man is mysterious; he might be Abram from Genesis 13:9, showing Lot the land before him; or he is Lot, choosing his path towards the plains; or he is an angel of the Lord, appearing to show Abram the land before him in a reiteration of God's promise (Genesis 13:15). The fourth, most unlikely option is that the man is a depiction of God. This is unlikely because of the use of the Tetragrammaton which is the depiction of YHWH and negates the need to actually depict God in human form which was considered blasphemous and contentious – especially in Hollar's time.[136] The most probable option is that it is Abram, and that Hollar is combining several points in time in his etching: specifically the point of separation (Genesis 13:11) and God's reiteration of his promise to Abram (Genesis 13:15).

Again, this shows Abram to be the one in power, with the connection to YHWH. The separation of uncle and nephew is a pointer towards the ongoing conversation between Abram and YHWH. Kessler & Deurloo explain: "Lot trusted his eyes. Abram rather awaited the word his ears would hear […] Abram only raised his eyes after he had been addressed; only then he moved from hearing to seeing."[137] Hollar's etching demonstrates this firstly by Abram looking directly towards Lot and away from the landscape so the land is not his focus, and secondly by the figure of Abram on the hill looking upwards towards the voice of YHWH, again away from the landscape. The conversation is one-sided in this panel but it is ubiquitous: Abram is listening, loud and clear. In this passage, Lot is seen as the 'other,' the "foil for Abram, as a representative of the *goyim*, the nations."[138] Prior to the birth of Ishmael and Isaac, Lot was the only viable option for an heir for Abram, a near

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[136] Rodov, *Script in Christian Art*, p. 8.
[137] M. Kessler & K. Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis: The Book of Beginnings.* Paulist Press: New York, 2004, pp.103-104.
[138] Ibid, p. 104.

unthinkable situation since Lot was not a direct descendant of Abram. The split between them ensures the narrative focuses on Abram, thus emphasising the important role he plays without distraction of the 'other.' Abram's nation will be YHWH's people, not a foreign or diluted bloodline. Again, the emphasis is on the covenant, but the reiteration of the promise from YHWH in the panel now comes with additional promise of land meaning Abram need not be a wanderer, nomad or immigrant anymore. These images encompass the theme of Covenant and Land, with a particular emphasis on land which becomes even more prevalent as the panels progress.

Fig 2.8: Panel 5, *Abraham pursues ye Kings and beats them.*

Fig 2.8 depicts the moment Abram pursues four kings as far as the city of Dan to rescue Lot. Like the previous panel, the caption above this panel references a single verse 'etc.' Genesis 14:3 concerns the moment the battle begins: "All these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea)." Hollar is again relying heavily on the reader's own knowledge of the narrative in order to interpret the picture. The pursuit of the kings occurs in Scripture in Genesis 14:14, ending two verses later. However by using the reference to 14:3 in the caption. Hollar is inviting the reader to recall the circumstances behind the pursuit and the political situation of Abram in the midst of Kings and armies in battle. Specifically, Hollar is reminding the reader that Abram is involved directly because he is rescuing his nephew – at this point his only heir. The subtle allusion to Lot's capture is

perhaps a nod towards Abram's family situation, particularly the lack of progeny so promised by YHWH. It also links the theme of land: Abram is forced to travel from his nomadic settlement to a land infested with bitumen pits on the edge of cities and become involved in an international power struggle between kings for control of land.

However, even though this panel touches on these themes, it really serves as a damning indictment on the decision of Lot in the previous panel. Lot saw Sodom with his eyes and failed to 'hear' YHWH's instruction. Conversely, Abram listened to YHWH and only then lifted his eyes. The mistake of Lot is a result of his not being in conversation with God, unlike his uncle. It is then, a continuation of the conversation between Abram and YHWH even though no-one speaks. The panel is the darkest in the series – partly because the battle takes place at night (Genesis 14:15) but also because Hollar is making a statement that by not following God's path, the road turns dark and dangerous. The contrast between light and dark in the panel is profound: Abram's men are highlighted in white while everybody and everything else falls into shadow. Gone are the gently rolling hills of the first two panels, replaced by looming mountains and rugged landscapes. This change in landscape is also a signifier of difficult and imposing times; it is a visual theme which recurs throughout these panels and is discussed in more detail in later sections.

Fig 2.9: Panel 6, *Melchizedek brings forth Bread and Wine to Abraham.*

Showing the conclusion of the narrative opened by the previous panel, panel 6 (Fig 2.9) depicts one of the most popular Genesis narratives which is read by many Christians as a prologue for the coming of Christ. The story of Melchizedek offering Abram bread and wine after the fray of battle is considered to be a prefiguration of the Eucharist,[139] and thus cements Abram's status as an important figure in the history of Christ, as he is the first to 'receive' the offering. The name 'Melchizedek' is translated from the Hebrew מלכי (malki) 'king,' and צדק (tsedek) 'righteousness,' indicating that Melchizedek is understood to be a King of Righteousness. Genesis 14:18 introduces him as the King of Salem and the priest of על עליון (El Elyon), "God Most High" both of which imply that he is of a higher status and rank than Abram. This is confirmed by the giving of tithes in Genesis 14:20: "And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything," meaning Abram gave Melchizedek one-tenth of his possessions. The giving of tithes is mentioned again in Hebrews 7:4 and 6 and is followed by the words: "It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior" (Hebrews 7:7). This passage is one of the arguments for Melchizedek as a prefiguration of Christ.[140] Melchizedek is recognised as Abram's superior then, and in some circles is regarded as an early manifestation of Jesus Christ,[141] and in some others a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.[142]

Hollar's image does everything to reinforce the superiority of Melchizedek over Abram. Firstly, the inscription describing the panel is exactly right. The corroboration between inscription and image implies that Hollar wants his audience to recognise that the panel is solely about Melchizedek's authority over Abram. Referencing the exact passage which contains the exchange leaves no room for misunderstanding or for reading more into the narrative. It is straightforward and effective: this priest-King is bestowing a blessing upon Abram and Abram recognises that in his inferior position he must in turn pay tithes to the priest-king.[143] Secondly, Melchizedek stands out visually because his clothing is utterly different to those surrounding him; they are in battle-gear but he is in long, flowing robes with a pointed hat, and is similar in style to the costumes Hollar depicted in his records of

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[139] F. Horton Jr., *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews,* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1976, pp. 160-163.
[140] Ibid, pp. 152-156.
[141] See T. Longman, *How to Read Genesis,* InterVarsity Press: Illinois, 2005, p.74 for further information on Melchizedek as an early representation of Jesus Christ.
[142] Melchizedek as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit comes from Hebrews 7:3; "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever." The lack of genealogy implies Melchizedek was a spiritual representation of the divine rather than a human manifestation.
[143] R. Davidson, *Genesis 12-50: Commentary by Robert Davidson,* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1979, p. 34.

monks and other religious orders.[144] However far from being plain, his clothes are also embellished with pattern and a few adornments (such as the nobility or gentry might wear), indicating he is both a religious and political leader. Such adornments on his clothes suggest the image was created for a Catholic audience as opposed to a Protestant one; the decorative garment went against the 'simple' or plain style expounded by Protestant leaders.

Fig 2.10: Illustration of Melchizedek and Abraham in *Quadrins historiques de la Bible,* B. Salomon, published by Jean de Tournes, Lyon, 1553.

However, the most striking thing about this panel is that it is not unique. In fact, around the same time that Hollar was producing this sequence, other artists were working on similar etchings, and at least three contained this image with hardly any changes. Van der Coelen asserts that these images all came after Matthaeus Merian the Elder's prints for his *Icones Biblicae,* completed c.1625-1630 and published in Amsterdam (see Fig 2.11).[145] However, it can actually be traced as far back as 1553 to Bernard Salomon's illustrations for the *Quadrins historiques de la Bible,* published by Jean de Tournes in Lyon (see Fig 2.10).[146]

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[144] See Appendix A, Fig 6.4 – 6.6.
[145] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 46.
[146] R. Baron, "Emblem and Narrative in Bernard Salomon's Illustration to the Old Testament", 2004, http://www.studiolo.org/BSProject/BIBLE/JOSHUA/BSJoshua.htm#appendix-01 (September 2014).

It seems fairly clear that Salomon's image serves as the blueprint for the later, mid-seventeenth century etchings by Hollar, Hendricksz. Schutz and others.[147] Van der Coelen suggests that Salomon's image and composition was probably used by other artists creating picture Bibles around the same time, especially those published by the Visscher Publishing house, suggesting a connection between all of the artists working for that house.[148] Quite what makes this particular image so popular and worthy of being copied many times over is not entirely clear. The composition and style are not unusual, nor do they stand out. The fact remains however that close copies of the figures from the *Quadrains historiques de la Bible* were rendered by no fewer than three separate artists almost one hundred years after its first publication, and only minor details such as the background were altered; below are details from Matthaeus Merian the Elder's print, and Hollar's panel for comparison:

Fig 2.11: Detail from *Abraham and Melchizedek*, Matthaeus Merian (c.1625).

Fig 2.12: Detail from Panel 6, *Melchizedek brings forth Bread and Wine to Abraham.*

Clearly, the two main figures are the same but reversed, and this suggests that Hollar may have actually directly copied the Melchizedek (or Salomon) etching onto a plate, and the image would have become reversed when printed. From Salomon's print onwards, the etchings using this image and composition share other similarities as well, such as the army of men wielding spears behind Abram, Abram's own garb of armour, and a wine-carrier who stands beside Melchizedek. As previously stated, there is nothing to suggest why the image was continually replicated after Salomon, nor is there any suggestion as to whether or not the story was overly popular in biblical art and illustration during that

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[147] See Appendix A, Fig 6.7 for Hendricksz Schutz's image of the Melchizedek narrative.
[148] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 46.

century, other than it representing the pre-figuration of the Eucharist. It may simply have been that this particular representation of Melchizedek meeting Abram was considered as the perfect portrayal and so continuously duplicated. It may also have been that Merian was influenced by the Salomon image, and Merian's authority in the world of Netherlandish printmaking was being recognised by other etchers who were greatly influenced by him, including Hollar.

On a cultural and political level the Melchizedek story spoke strongly to seventeenth-century England, and London in particular. Panel 5 and 6 together tell the political story of the suzerain-vassal relationship between the mighty Mesopotamia and the smaller tributary regions around the Valley of Siddim, the conclusion of which is astounding; Abram – who only becomes involved to rescue his nephew – manages to vanquish the powerful army of the four Mesopotamian kings. This is a feat which the five vassal-kings could not accomplish as shown in the previous verses (Genesis 14:8-11). In Jewish Midrash, this was interpreted as an inspirational story which showed a small group of men under YHWH could overcome political authorities to succeed in their endeavours.[149] As previously observed, in a Christian tradition, the Melchizedek narrative served to highlight the coming of Christ and a new type of Priesthood which usurped the Aaronic tradition borne from Abram.[150] In Hollar's London, however, Genesis 14 was completely relevant to the power-struggle between Westminster and the throne.

Charles I (who ruled between 1625 and 1649) believed in the divine right of kings and as such, attempted to govern according to his own conscience.[151] This was tantamount to absolute monarchy, a concept which did not sit well with Protestant leaders and reformed groups. Charles was eventually defeated in the Civil War which rocked England and Scotland, and was convicted of treason after failing to agree to a constitutional monarchy. He was executed in January 1649 which was most likely around the same time that Hollar produced his Abraham series. Absolute monarchy relied heavily on the theory of divine-right kingship, which stated that a king was subject to no authority on earth, but was only answerable to the divine judgment of God.[152] Any attempt to overthrow the king was deemed as an act which was contrary to the will of God, and therefore treated as sacrilegious, and sometimes, treason. Charles I, like his father, James VI of Scotland and later James I of England, tried to justify the implementation of absolute monarchy

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[149] Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, p. 34.
[150] Ibid, p. 39.
[151] J. Patrick (ed.) *Renaissance and Reformation*, Marshall Cavendish: New York, 2007, p. 239.
[152] Ibid.

theologically, through use of the Bible.[153] The figure of Melchizedek served as an example that priest-kings were part of the tradition of biblical scripture, and that even Abram, the Father of Nations, was subservient to them. While reformed groups disputed this ideology, it may have found favour within Catholic groups who approved of the king's Catholic wife and who interpreted Scripture rather more traditionally than the Reformers. Hollar's image certainly advocates the identification of Melchizedek as superior to Abram, and the inclusion of this particular image is a nod to the ancient priest-king tradition adopted by Charles I. Even though Hollar probably produced the series in Antwerp, his ties to London never loosened the panel could thus be interpreted as a small political statement in favour of the monarchy, at a time when it was not advisable for Royalists to show their true colours.

Davidson calls Genesis 14 "an erratic boulder in the Genesis landscape" because it does not fit in with the preceding and succeeding chapters. He also notes it is the only section in the entire Abraham narrative which "seeks to relate Abram to wider significant historical events."[154] In some respects, Hollar is recreating this concept by including a panel which at first, seems out of place with the rest of his series. It does not instantly fit the themes of Land, Son or Promise so carefully constructed throughout the rest of the narrative, and it is also the only panel (read along with Panel 5) which seeks to make a subtle supportive statement on behalf of the Royalist cause Panel 6 is itself, an "erratic boulder" in Hollar's *Abraham* series.

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[153] Ibid, p. 239.
[154] Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, p. 32.
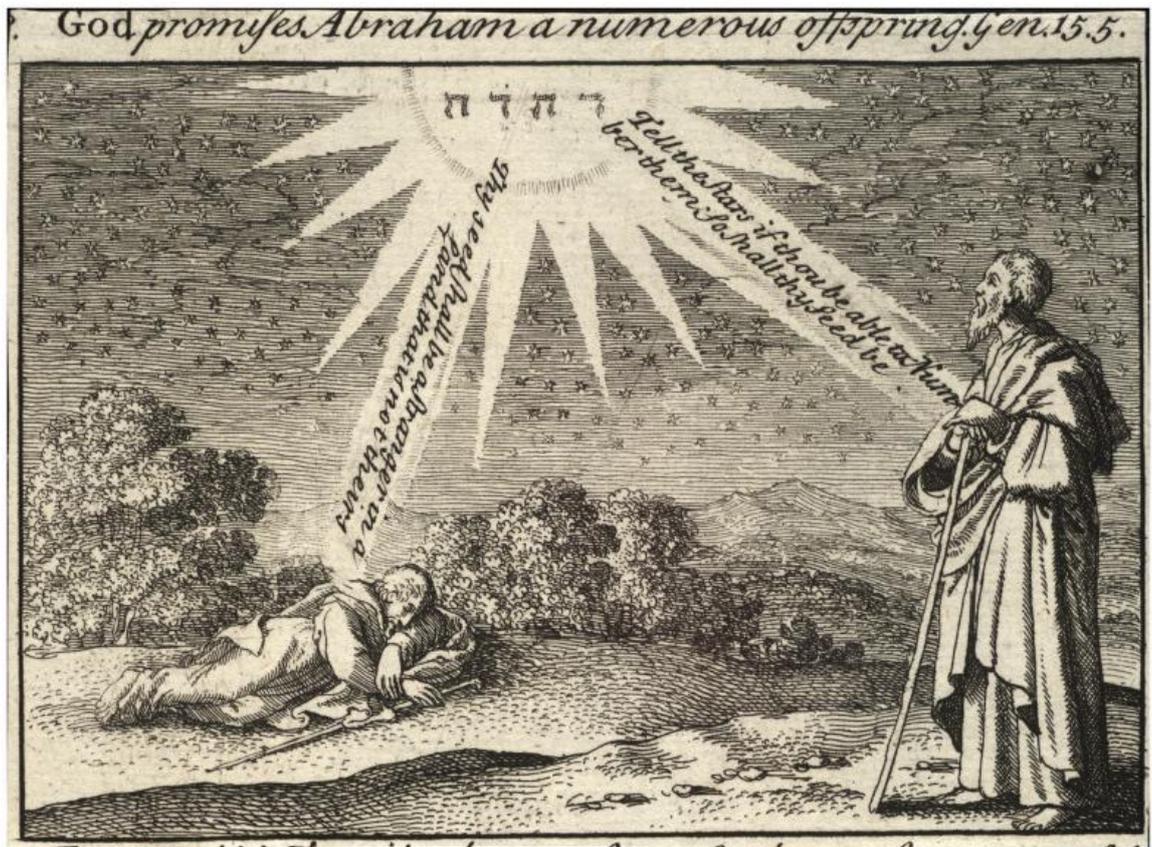
Fig 2.13: Panel 7, *God promised Abraham a numerous offspring*.

After the drama of Panels 5 and 6, the seventh panel offers – quite literally – respite. Genesis 15 marks a return to the intermingling themes of Promise and Land. It also marks a return to the conversation between Abram and YHWH, which was absent in the previous panel. Once again, the Tetragrammaton appears out of the sky, this time in the middle of a sun, surrounded by stars. Two figures divide the panel; one apparently asleep, the other looking towards the heavens. They are both Abram; one sleeping and the other in the midst of a vision. If read along with the scripture, the image reads from right-to-left and again it comprises more than the solitary verse referenced in the inscription. In fact the action within covers Genesis 15:5-13, the prologue to a covenant made in Chapter 15:18 but which contain the conditions and reward of said covenant. This is the first time God promises Abram land, as well as progeny who will come from his own blood and not from his slave as was his worry. Abela, amongst other scholars, considers Genesis 15 as "the most important" with regards to the themes of Land and Son.[155] In two parts, YHWH promises the frustrated Abram that his descendants will be as countless as the stars (15:5) and that they will also be strangers "in a land that is not theirs" (15:13) before finally returning to the land YHWH would provide (15:18-21).

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[155] Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, p. 94.

Choosing to depict the scene from right-to-left is somewhat an awkward way to read the panel but is perhaps Hollar's way of acknowledging how original scripture was read in Hebrew. Hollar makes great use of the landscape in his panels, drawing the eye to certain aspects he wishes to emphasise, or using it to show the reader which way the story flows. In this panel, for example, he uses the gently rolling hill at Abram's feet to move the eye down towards the sleeping Abram, so that the reader can follow the story with ease. The sleeping Abram represents the moment just before the sealing of the covenant (known often as the Covenant of Pieces, Genesis 15:9-17) and in that case, Hollar has failed to represent a key point of the narrative: that is the sacrificed animals which create a path through which the spirit of God passes (Genesis 15:17). Perhaps that image would have been considered too distasteful for the buying public. Instead, a subtle allusion to a pathway is created by the landscape in the panel; Hollar has created a divide in the panel between the figures using the land, above which the Tetragrammaton shines as if from a "blazing torch" – the manifestation of the spirit of God which passes between the pieces (which also appears in the covenant making ceremony at Mt. Sinai between YHWH and Moses). The conversation between Abram and YHWH continues, both in scripture and in the panel. Abram questions YHWH on specific topics and demands answers, which YHWH provides – Hollar clearly depicts the answers. The relationship between the image and the text in this panel is insightful and shows why this medium was useful as a bible illustration; though there is no indication to how Abram takes YHWH's answers, Hollar can show his (imagined) response. In this case, Abram appears wearied and worried in both consciousness and sleep. The scripture is sparse, suggesting that although Abram questions YHWH, he accepts the answers he is given and prepares the sacrifices for the covenantal ritual without question. By visually presenting Abram's response, he becomes much easier to identify with and therefore understand.

Fig 2.14: Panel 8, *Sarah complains that Hagar despises her.*

If we bear in mind that the Abraham cycle is chiastic, panel 8 (Fig 2.14) is the central point of that story. Genesis 16:1-14 is the central narrative emphasised by the pattern preceding and succeeding it. This singular panel embodies all fourteen of those verses, even though it is headed by the reference to the single verse, 16:4; "He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress." Like Panel 7, this image also reads from right to left. Sarai presents Hagar to Abram, complaining of her attitude: Abram's response is to "do with Hagar as she pleases" (16:6). Sarai treats her harshly, almost certainly out of jealousy and hurt, resulting in Hagar running away. Panning left (this time the scene is divided by a wall), Hagar is shown in the wilderness, seated in a mountainous landscape, reflecting her inescapable predicament. An Angel of the Lord is before her, calling "Hagar where art thou" (16:8). In an echo of Abram's covenant with God in the previous panel, Hagar is also told that her offspring will be great in number. The combination of text and image in this panel suggests that the overarching theme in this panel is that of Son.[156]

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[156] Abela, *The Themes of the Abraham Narrative*, p. 47.

There are few more important scenes in the Abraham cycle than that which takes place between Abram, Hagar and Sarai. Firstly it highlights the fragility of the family. Sarai is barren and while it was not unusual for a wife to give her maid to her husband (any child conceived would lawfully belong to the wife)[157] the author of this narrative suggests that Sarai struggled with the decision. Hagar probably felt a sense of superiority over her mistress – she could bear children, thus ensuring Abram's line remained – and Sarai could not. Indeed, Sarai complains as much, accusing Hagar of no longer acting in a subservient manner (16:6). Hollar captures this beautifully, depicting Hagar in a contemptuous, haughty manner, positioned between Abram and Sarai, as if taking her mistress' place. An act of custom has nearly torn apart a family unit, even though the act ensured Abram would have descendants as promised. The action echoes Abram's worries that his house will succeed only through his servant from Panel 7 (Genesis 15:2) because Hagar is a servant, not a lawful wife. Abram again looks wearied, seated upon a bench while Sarai casts her eyes down in a gesture of inferiority perhaps to Hagar or perhaps to her husband.

Fig 2.15: Detail from Panel 8, *Sarah complains that Hagar despiser her.*

The reader of course was probably familiar with Hagar's impending fate, but Hollar successfully tells the story without giving away what is coming. The most interesting aspect of his image is on the left-hand side, where the action occurs between Hagar and the Angel of the Lord (Fig 2.15). Firstly, this is actually a depiction of YHWH himself, although Hollar may not have realised so. In Genesis 16:13 it is written that Hagar "called the name of the LORD who spoke to her" and it is generally agreed that this means that the Angel of the Lord we are introduced to in 16:7 is not a "heavenly being subordinate to God but the LORD himself in earthly manifestation."[158] Interestingly, Hollar has etched a representation of YHWH and this casts the memory back to Panel 4 when a mysterious figure appears on the mountaintop between Abram and Lot. Hollar may have been aware of

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[157] NRSV Oxford Annotated Bible, p. 18.
[158] Ibid, p. 18.

the character however, as stylistically he has represented the speech of the 'Angel' in the same way he presents YHWH's speech: straight, and directed precisely toward the receiver, as opposed to in a winding and indirect manner, such as in Panel 3 (and upcoming Panels 10 and 12).

The importance of this story in the seventeenth century has already been touched upon, and it was a popular story both in art and in literature. However it was more popular to portray the scene where Abram actually banishes Hagar to the wilderness (which occurs in Genesis 21), because this a poignant, emotional situation which created repercussions those in the 1600s would have keenly felt, which will be further discussed in the close reading of the Panel 13. However, Goldingay notes that the importance of the Hagar-Ishmael story (and the centre of a chiastic reading of Genesis 12-22) is in the introduction of Ishmael *before* Isaac.[159] Other scholarly interpretations, including those by Jonathan Magonet and Gordon Wenham, read Genesis 16 as a "false climax"[160] or a "diversion,"[161] meaning Ishmael is just a prelude to Isaac, not the main 'star'. Goldingay argues that Ishmael is as significant as Isaac, and that Genesis 16 emphasises his importance precisely because it is wedged right in the centre of a chiastic structure: "Centre stage was Isaac's destiny, but before his birth his father gave it away."[162] The centre of the Abraham narrative is Ishmael's appearance, buffeted by parallel stories either side. Hollar quite clearly validates this reading by placing the Hagar panel in the centre of his series.

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[159] J. Goldingay, "The Place of Ishmael" in *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives,* P. R. Davies & D. J. Clines (Ed.) Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1998, p. 147.
[160] J. Magonet, *Bible Lives*, SCM Press: London, 1992, p. 29.
[161] G. Wenham, *The Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50,* Word Books: Dallas, 1994, p. 13.
[162] Goldingay, *The Place of Ishmael*, p. 147,

Fig 2.16: Panel 9, *God reneweth his covenant with Abraham.*

If Panel 8 is the central point of the Abraham cycle, according to the rules of chiastic structure, the next eight panels should follow the previous pattern in reverse. Panel 9 does exactly that. In Panel 7, we saw the ritual of covenant between Abram and YHWH and in this panel, we see a renewal of that covenant and subsequently the name-change of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah.[163] Abram has fallen to his face (Genesis 17:3) as God reiterates the covenant between them: *"My covenant is with thee & thou shalt be a Father of many Nations"* (17:2-4). However the covenant now comes with conditions, an important point absent from Hollar's image. Abram must circumcise himself and all the males in his household, including his servants and slaves as proof of faithfulness and to serve as a mark of distinction for his special relationship with YHWH. Abram is renamed Abraham, "father of a multitude" and Sarai becomes Sarah, meaning "princess" "for kings of peoples shall come from her (17:16). The image of Abraham bowing his face to the ground captures the moment YHWH promises him that out of Sarah, he will have a son. Abraham is slow to believe. However it also serves a dual purpose to the reader; Abram is now Abraham and thus is a stranger to the readers, a new character yet to be introduced.

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[163] "A new name signifies a new relationship of status" (NRSV Oxford Annotated Bible, p. 34).

The inference that this panel is about more than one verse (indicated by the use of &c. in the inscription) is again Hollar relying on his audience's familiarity with the story. Of course, it has already been noted several times that the concept of covenant was an important one in the mid-1600s, and this image reiterates that idea, in particular by stressing the relationship between YHWH and Abraham through the use of conversation once more. The quote in the panel, *"My covenant is with thee & thou shalt be a Father of many Nations"* has three intentions. Firstly, it is a reminder that Abraham is already a father. Secondly, it is a reminder that he will be the 'father' of many more through his descendants, and thirdly, it is a reminder that he will be the father of not one singular nation, but of "many Nations". This is a direct reference to the upcoming expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael which leads to the beginnings of the Arab people and Islam, and the birth of Isaac who is seen as the pre-figuration of Christ and Christianity. The reference to 'Nations' is also a reference to the land promised to Abraham for his descendants – Israel. The image covers all three of the central topics of the Abraham narrative – Promise, Land and Son, and it also revisits the lesser theme of migrant/immigrant which is of course tied heavily to the theme of Land. Immigration was of course a topic of hot discourse during the mid-1600s when many were either forced to flee from the possibility of persecution,[164] or chose to leave to explore and become a part of the new lands being discovered. Understanding Abraham as the "Father of many Nations" whilst depicting him as a stranger with a new name served the dual purpose of reminding migrants and immigrants that God was not bound by identities, land boundaries or the familiar; he was to be found in the strange and exotic as well. If many Nations were borne of his seed, it meant that he served as a pre-existing connection between strangers.

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[164] As discussed above, Chapter One, section Four.

Fig 2.17: Panel 10, *Abraham entertains three angels.*

Following on from the previous panel which reminded the reader of the connection between Isaac and Christ, the scene depicted in Panel 10 (Fig 2.17) is often interpreted as a prefiguration and symbol of the Holy Trinity. Not coincidentally, Abraham entertaining three Angels at Mamre is one of the three most popular Abraham narratives to depict in art – the other two being the Melchizedek narrative and the Sacrifice of Isaac.[165] Visually speaking, Hollar's version is in keeping with the rest of his series, including the unfussy landscape and simple figures. There are five figures in the foreground; the three angels, Abraham, and Sarah hiding behind a door. Of the three angels, one has a halo around his head and appears much younger and fresh-faced. Conversely, the other two appear aged and without a halo. Van der Coelen suggests that during the mid-seventeenth century, it became normal for artists to emphasise one of the angels over the others for various reasons.[166] For example, Rembrandt produced similar images, one of which bathed one angel in light and left the others in darkness to signify the bringer of God's word, the one who gives light to those in darkness.[167]

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[165] P. Murray & L. Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture,* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 2.
[166] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 69.
[167] See Appendix A, Fig 6.8 for a copy of *Abraham Serving the Angels*, Rembrandt, 1646.

Hollar does not bathe his angel in light but gives him a halo for a crown and the central position at the table, so in a similar manner he is differentiating this angel and probably pinpointing him as the messenger of God. Note that none of the angels in Panel 10 have wings but are portrayed more like human beings, unlike his other depictions of angels (see Panels 8, 13 and 14 for examples). In the background, we see (rather faintly) four figures; two are in conversation and two are walking away. Very faint outlines of a town or building appear in the background on the right.

Once again, the panel incorporates several passages, denoted by the use of '&c' in the heading. Strangely however, this time the narrative begins in the indistinct background of the image, moves to the foreground in the left before returning to the far right where two figures walk away. It begins with Abraham greeting an angel (the same angel emphasised in the foreground with the halo), with the words *"If I have found favour in thy sight,"* a reference to Genesis 18:3 when Abraham first sees the strangers walking by. The fact that there is only one angel being greeted by Abraham (see Fig 2.18, right), further suggests this angel is the messenger of God or God himself. It may also be a reference to Genesis 18:1, "The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre." This singular reference to

God in Scripture is one of the reasons given for believing Abraham was visited by YHWH and not just a messenger of the Lord. Hollar seems to be thinking along similar lines as he expresses the very same sentiment in his panel. The scene moves to the left, showing the feast offered to his guests (Genesis 18:4-8) with Sarah standing in the doorway of a house; the biblical passage mentions a 'tent' rather than house, but Hollar has updated the tent to a house in order to modernise the subject for his audience. This is a specific depiction of Genesis 18:9-10, the announcement that she will fall pregnant and give birth to a son, which Sarah overhears from the doorway. The scene then moves rather disjointedly back towards the left where two men walk out of the frame. This is probably a reference to Genesis 18:22, "So the men turned from there, and went toward

Fig 2.18: Detail from Panel 10, *Abraham entertains three angels.*

Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD." Here, Hollar has completed the reading of the panel by returning to the opening image; Abraham standing in front of God. The image reflects the structure of the narrative which also returns to Abraham standing in front of God. In Scripture, the rest of Chapter 18 is a divine speech given by YHWH to Abraham concerning the impending destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah. While this conversation is not included in the image, it is alluded to by Hollar's choice to incorporate the cities in the background. The image also highlights the continued conversation between Abraham and YHWH, this time portraying Abraham in both active and passive roles of speaker and listener. Again this alludes to the latter part of Chapter 18 where a full conversation takes place between the two, with Abraham going so far as to bargain with his god on behalf of the innocent left in Sodom and Gomorrah. It is a scene full of reminders of the consequences of both pleasing and displeasing God.

With regards to major themes, the focus is yet again on Promise, Land and Son. However a lesser theme also surfaces, one which is prevalent throughout Genesis and much of the Old Testament; Hospitality. Hospitality shown towards travellers in the Old Testament was a sign of the "highest quality of human behaviour" and assured the reader of that character's righteousness.[168] According to Van der Coelen, this was a particularly popular theme in Netherlandish art in the seventeenth century, and it was quite normal for images of Abraham to be used as examples of hospitality. As a result of this, Abraham was the subject of a number of Dutch prints emphasising traits of hospitality which found their way on to the market through the main trading centre of Antwerp – Hollar's one-time home.[169] There is every likelihood Hollar recognised that the image of Abraham entertaining the angels was very popular with the buying public because it touched on those themes which were most important to communities; hospitality, community and divine relationships. The narrative was also used in political and religious debate quite frequently during this time; for example Winstanley cast the angels as three men who disappeared rather than three angels, which meant that, to him, they did not serve as a symbol of the Holy Trinity. Winstanley's interpretation also lessens Abraham's position of authority as being in a close relationship with YHWH; he implied that there was nothing special about this meeting after all.[170]

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[168] Kessler & Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis*, p. 113.
[169] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 8.
[170] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, p. 223.

Fig 2.19: Panel 11, *Lot and his family depart from Sodom.*

The serene calm of Panel 10 is turned on its head by the succeeding panel, Panel 11: Lot and his family depart from Sodom, Gen 19.15 &c. The link between the two panels is close. Wenham suggests a palistrophic pattern exists between the narratives of Genesis 18:1 and 19:38.[171] In terms of chiastic structure in the narrative as a whole, this panel reflects Genesis 13 neatly, another narrative concerning Lot departing another area. This image is one of the most powerful and dramatic etchings in the series. Gone are the gently rolling hillsides and clear skies. Hollar again uses landscape to set the mood of the panel. The scene centres on Lot leaving the city with his two daughters, walking out of frame towards the right. Behind the group is a pillar shaped like a female, labelled simply 'Lot's Wife'. Behind her, Sodom is ravaged by fire, smoke and general destruction. The sky is filled with curling flames and billowing smoke. Hollar again uses the contours of the ground to divide the narrative in the panel (as in Panels 7 and 10); he separates the fleeing group from the pillar of salt and the burning city using dark lines meant to emphasise rises and bumps in the ground. In the background a steep hill rises with a single figure standing on top. On first viewing, it is unclear who that person is.

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[171] Wenham, *The Word Biblical Commentary*, pp. 40-41.

As in the previous panel, the narrative does not run in a single direction. If the viewer was reading scripture alongside the etching, the image would seem chaotic and disordered. The four main scenes in the panel are as follows:

a. The destruction of Sodom;
b. Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt;
c. Lot and his two daughters fleeing, and;
d. The figure watching the scene

The narrative in scripture runs from C to A to B to D. It could be argued Hollar muddled the image to heighten the sense of drama and confusion, invoking emotions which relate to the central character's own experiences. This is not usual in the rest of the panels, save perhaps Panel 5 showing the battle of the Kings which is a little disorganised. Presumably, the figure on the mountainous hilltop is Abraham, a reference to Genesis 19:28: "And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace." The inclusion of Abraham in this panel denotes several things. Firstly, it is a reminder to the reader that Abraham tried to save the cities in a conversation with YHWH, seen at the end of the close-reading of Panel 10. It also serves as a reminder that Abraham's intercession saves Lot, and that this is a duplication of an earlier scene where he has previously saved his nephew (Genesis 14:16). Even before that incident, we are forcibly reminded that Abram and Lot were once on the same path until they parted ways, and that Lot knew Sodom was not a city of honour yet he chose to settle there (Genesis 13:8-9). The fact Abraham can stand safely on top of a mountain and view the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah indicates he chose the correct path which enabled his close relationship with YHWH. It is also a neat reminder of the central theme of Son, or progeny, running throughout this sequence. There was a point where Abraham's closest relative was his nephew, and it seemed he might be the only one who could carry on Abraham's bloodline. Abraham bargains with God precisely to save his own kin, his bloodline. Finally, the image prompts the reader to recall a very early theme in the narrative; that of the *goyim* casting Lot as representative of nations outside of Abraham's line. Though Abraham is aware of YHWH's plan for the cities, and even though he is successful in bargaining for his nephew's safety, Abraham does not go to view the destruction until after the event. Pictorially, Hollar has created such a space between the two that it is clear there is no relationship between them. Lot is, as ever, the counter-figure to Abraham, as Ishmael will

become to Isaac.[172] To further this concept of Lot as the 'nations' or the 'counter-figure' to Abraham, Hill tells us that in the seventeenth century, it became common for Lot to be used as an example of the Antichrist, guilty of "thwarting the establishment of Christ's kingdom."[173] Hill continues that Richard Overton (an English pamphleteer and Leveller during the English civil war and Interregnum) "gave fourteen Biblical references for toleration of sects and different religions," including the stories of Lot.[174] Hollar's image corresponds to this line of thinking, depicting Lot in a negative light compared to his uncle.

Fig 2.20: Panel 12, *Abimelech rebuketh Abraham.*

In stark contrast to the previous panel, this is a gentle image which, on first appearance, is nearly an exact replica of Panel 3: Pharaoh restores Sarah to Abraham (Genesis 12:19), falling into the chiastic pattern of the Abraham cycle again. In another wavy speech bubble, Abimelech beseeches Abraham, *"What hast thou done unto us,"* a reference to Genesis 20:9. A bag of money, presumably containing a thousand shekels is exchanged between Abimelech and Abraham as 'payment' for the wrong done to Abraham and his wife (Genesis 20:16: "Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver"). In the background, a group of men stand talking in a courtyard. One of the men is wearing a

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[172] Kessler & Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis*, p. 104.
[173] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, p. 320.
[174] Ibid.

crown and presenting the other man with animals and slaves. Hollar has depicted two moments in one panel, crossing time by showing a later point in the narrative where Abimelech bids Abraham to settle in his land. This panel has a sense of time passing, and is cleverly drawn.

Once again, Hollar has depicted a number of verses between Genesis 20:9 and 20:15, but again he has etched the narrative in a muddled fashion, moving from right to left, to right again. The addition of the bag of coins allows two very separate biblical verses to occur at the same time, meaning Hollar has merged two different parts of the narrative into one, missing out the dialogue and action in between. Unlike Panel 3, Sarah is still entirely in the grasp of Abimelech; he is positioned between her and Abraham. This is at odds with Scripture, which indicates that by this point she has been relinquished by the King. The text also explicitly states that Abimelech has not touched Sarah (Genesis 20:6), and while this probably refers to sexual contact rather than him holding her back, his hand touching her in Hollar's panel indicates that she is in his possession. However the act of paying Abraham and then offering him land, animals and slaves corresponds to the Melchizedek narrative, wherein Abraham has the 'upper hand', and is recognised as an authority because of his relationship with YHWH.

Fig 2.21: Comparisons between Panels 3 and 12. *Note the similarities between the posture of the figures, the use of speech bubbles and the townscape in the background.*

Fig 2.22: Panel 13, *Abraham's Feast when Isaac was weaned.*

Abraham's Feast when Isaac was weaned (Fig 2.22) is read sequentially from left to right. The relationship between the inscription at the top, the speech bubble inside the panel and the image itself lead the viewer to understand the narrative sequence of the panel. The speech from the angel in particular, *"Lift up the Lad"* specifically refers to Genesis 21:18, when the Angel of the Lord visits Hagar in the wilderness saying, "Come, lift up the lad and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Note the similarity between YHWH's promise to Ishmael and his promise to Abraham earlier in Genesis – specifically the phrase "make a great nation of him". Here we have a reiteration of YHWH's covenant with Abraham as well as a fulfilment of YHWH's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:20 and 21:13, that Ishmael will not be forgotten and will be a father of 'twelve princes'. Preceding that moment, however, is the scene of the feast when Sarah asks Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness.

The scene itself clearly shows Isaac and Ishmael playing together in the foreground (strangely, Ishmael appears a similar age to Isaac despite the thirteen year age gap described in the biblical narrative) with the feast taking place behind them. Sarah is watching them play, inclining her head towards Abraham and (presumably) asking him to expel Hagar and her son. Hollar again uses the walls of the building to divide the scene (as

in Panels 3, 8, 10, 12 and 15), splitting the feast from the desolation of Hagar which is characterised by the image of Hagar slumped across the tree, as an angel stands before her. The wall is, in effect, a "gutter" *within* the panel rather than without.[175] As in previous panels, Hollar is relying on the readers' knowledge of the story and thus is prompting them to fill in the gap, creating the illusion of time and motion passing for themselves. While the inscription references one single verse, a closer reading of the panel shows that Hollar has carefully depicted the narrative between Genesis 21:8 and 21:18. He has effectively managed to fit what is probably a two or three day long story into a single panel. Recalling Panel 8, wherein Sarai complains that Hagar despises her, and in the exchange belies her own jealousy that Abram has a child with her slave, Panel 13 is the consequences of Abram's inaction at the time. Now a mother herself, Sarah does not want Isaac to share Abraham's special covenant with Ishmael and Abraham is asked to expel his son and Hagar. Whilst in Genesis 16:6, Hagar runs away from the ill-treatment of her mistress into the wilderness, apparently of her own accord, in Genesis 21:14, Hagar leaves as ordered by Abraham, again into the wilderness. In Genesis 16:6 Hagar is found by a spring of water; in 21:15 she has run out of water and faces certain death. Hagar places Ishmael in the bushes away from her view so she does not have to watch him die. Both narratives, however, tell how an angel of the Lord appears to her.

Fig 2.23: Detail from Panel 8, *Sarah complains that Hagar despises her.*
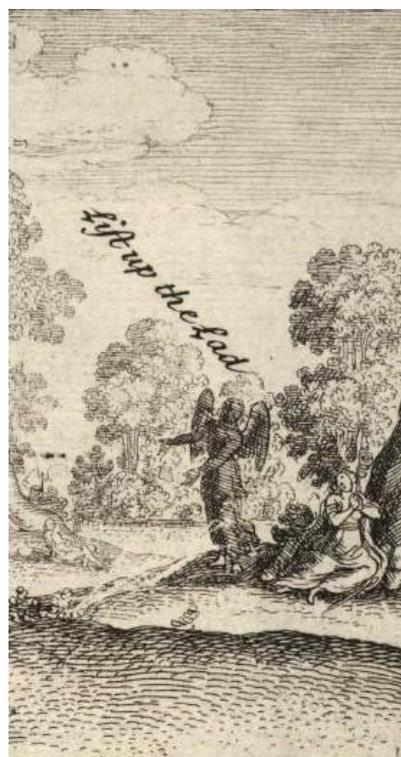
Fig 2.24: Detail from Panel 13, *Abrahams Feast when Isaac was weaned.*

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[175] In comic books and graphic novels, "gutters" are the space between the panels where readers apply their own imagination to understand the flow of the narrative.

There are certain similarities between the details of the panels, showing these scenes; the posture and style of the angel is similar, as is the position of Hagar. The main difference comes in the backgrounds. Panel 8 is mountainous and sparse, whereas Panel 13 is rich in vegetation and soft countryside. Hollar uses the background to indicate the outcome of Hagar's situation. The sparse, mountainous backdrop in Panel 8 refers to Hagar's desperate, bleak situation; she has run away from her mistress and faces uncertainty, upheaval and above all else, danger. Panel 13 is the opposite; while Scripture tells us more about her situation which leads the reader to assume she is in mortal peril due to lack of water, the rich, fertile background contradicts this by indicating all will be well. It also corresponds with YHWH's promise that both Hagar and Ishmael will survive and become prosperous, and that Ishmael will have descendants. The fertile and luscious environment is an indication of their future.

In terms of themes, this etching, like Panel 8, encompasses the themes of Covenant, Land and Son. Ishmael becomes the symbolic 'other' to Isaac and the separation which occurs in this narrative is the beginning of this. The narrative also prefigures the next part of the Abraham cycle; the Sacrifice of Isaac, as Abraham has been forced to give up one son already.

Fig 2.25: Panel 14, *Abraham going to offer Isaac.*

As panel 13 showed an entire narrative in the space of one panel, Panel 14 (Fig 2.25) is the complete opposite. For the first time, Hollar references the entire chapter in his inscription but his image shows only a mere snapshot of that chapter. That snapshot is the moment that the angel of the Lord stays Abraham's hand, preventing him from sacrificing his son which occurs in 22:12. Aside from referencing Chapter 22, the inscription also reads "Abraham going to offer Isaac". This is an unusual way to describe one of the most popular images in Christian art but it refers to the very beginning of the Sacrifice narrative: "So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burn offering and he set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him" (22:3).

Similar to most of the panels, Panel 14 encompasses more than one verse of scripture, but this time the clues lie in the inscription rather than the image. Wording the inscription in this way leads the reader to think of the beginning of the journey, while the image shows what happens at the very end. Again, the reader must fill in the blanks. The image even has the shadowy figure of the ram in the bushes which Abraham uses as an alternative sacrifice (Genesis 22:13), as well as his servants in the distance which serves as a reminder of Genesis 22:5: "Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." While at first glance referencing the entire chapter seems at odds with the single moment captured by the image, when read together, the relationship between the inscription and image actually aids the readers understanding of the whole narrative. Hollar has effectively portrayed most of the chapter in a single panel. He probably felt comfortable enough to do this because at this point in the mid-seventeenth century, the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac was a well-loved and well-known biblical narrative which was continuously depicted through art.[176] Even before the Renaissance era, images of the Sacrifice of Isaac (also known as the Binding of Isaac) proliferated as it came to represent "an instance of faith rewarded, a proof that souls trusting in divine mercy should have renewed and continued life, and an assurance that the course of safety lay in placing themselves in the hands of God."[177] Chapter Three considers other examples of etchings of the Sacrifice of Isaac produced at around the same time, and it is clear from them that Hollar drew inspiration for his version from artists like Dürer and Holbein. The narrative was the ultimate display of loyalty to God, and the image served as a reminder of the sacrifice Abraham was willing to

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[176] Murray & Murray, Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture, p. 2.
[177] A. M. Smith, "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Isaac in Early Christian Art" in *American Journal of Archaeology,* 26 (1922), pp. 159-173.

make to keep the covenant with YHWH, and assume his rightful place as the leader of God's people on earth. It is perhaps also worth noting that, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Abraham figured heavily as a model of faith for those following the message of Christ and the early Church.[178]

Fig 2.26: Panel 15, *Abraham sends his Servant to take a Wife for Isaac.*

Fig 2.27: Panel 16, *Abraham's Servant departs with Rebekah.*

Panels 15 and 16 (Fig 2.26 and 2.27 respectively) are similar in narrative, style and composition, both covering the Isaac and Rebekah narrative which occurs towards the end of the *Abraham* series, and outside the chiastic structure of the cycle which ends with Genesis 22. The first thing of note is the seated position of Abraham in Panel 15. The image is comparable to the depictions of Pharaoh and Abimelech in Panels 3 and 12, and thus casts Abraham into the role of a leader. The only other panel which includes Abraham in a seated position is Panel 8, wherein Sarah complains that Hagar despises her: the center of the chiastic arrangement. Abraham is now a figure of authority, a Leader of Nations. To further emphasise the point, Abraham's servant kneels at Abraham's feet in a way which is similar to Panels 1 and 2 of the series (see Fig 2.28, 2.29 and 2.30 below).

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[178] Hebrews 11:17-19 highlights Abraham's faith in its interpretation of Genesis 22: 'By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received promises was ready to offer up is only son, of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." He considered the fact that God is even able to raise someone from the dead – and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.'

Fig 2.28: Detail from Panel 1, *God Calleth Abraham.*

Fig 2.29: Detail from Panel 2, *Canaan is promised to Abraham.*

Fig 2.30: Detail from Panel 15, *Abraham sends his servant to take a Wife for Isaac.*

When Abraham kneels in the first two panels, it is to hear the words of the Covenant from YHWH, and to take the order which sends him on his journey. Likewise, Abraham's servant Eliezer kneels to take orders from his master and swear an oath that he will not return until he has fulfilled his duties. Finally, to drive home the point that Abraham is the one blessed by YHWH through the covenant made between them, he raises his hand above his servant in the style of a blessing even though a blessing does not take place in scripture. The servant is shown with his hand under Abraham's thigh in a sign of the promise he makes to find Isaac a wife from Abraham's own country, and not from the Canaanites among whom they now live (Genesis 24:2-9). It is clear the themes being referenced in this image concern the wider theme of Land as well as the lesser themes of foreignness, immigration and, as will be discussed below, hospitality.

Strangely, Hollar has related this panel to the entirety of Genesis 24 before inscribing panel 16 with the reference to 24:16. It is an odd move to reference an entire chapter before picking one verse for the succeeding image, and means that the two panels must be read together in order for them to be fully understood. Panel 15 reads from left-to-right, moving from the scene of Abraham and Eliezer to the scene in the background of Rebekah offering the servant water for himself and his camels (Genesis 24:16-19). A town – presumably Aram-naharaim – lies in the background. Again, Hollar uses an interior wall to divide the panel into two separate stories. Panel 16 shows the end result of Rebekah's generosity in

an image which is clearly a depiction of 24:61 even though the panel is labelled 24:16;
"Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels and followed the man; thus the
servant took Rebekah, and went his way." There is a slight possibility the panel was
labelled wrongly and the numbers were inverted from 61 to 16, and if so it is unlikely that
Hollar was the one who inscribed the series. However it may be deliberate; repeating
patterns or words is a device used to emphasise a point (especially in biblical Hebrew) and
the reference to 24:16 might be to reiterate the point that the Lord provided a wife for
Isaac. They could be a devotional device, used to showcase the fact that the Lord provides
to those who ask for help and guidance and this is similar to the lessons behind the
Sacrifice of Isaac narrative. The scene behind Rebekah on the camels is probably a
depiction of 24:53: "And the servant brought jewelry of silver and gold, and garments, and
gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments."

The narrative of Isaac and Rebekah was not used often in seventeenth century literature, art
or political debate. However, Amanda Pullen suggests that Rebekah was often used as a
central character in seventeenth-century needlework designs as a symbol of a good
housewife which ties in to the theme of hospitality. Pullen provides several examples of
tapestries to confirm her theory, several of which depict the scene of Rebekah offering
water to Eliezer, suggesting that this particular scene was frequently depicted because it
showed Rebekah's industrious nature and her readiness for marriage.[179] This image was
not often presented in works of art, but was popular with women creating their own
tapestries at home, as it signalled their own virtue of industry, their readiness for marriage,
and their willingness to become mothers.[180] Hollar may have been exposed to some of
these works, or recognised the way that Rebekah functioned as a role-model for young
women in the seventeenth century.

It is also possible that Hollar included these two panels to act as a link between the
Abraham series and the *Jacob* series, as the *Jacob* series opens with the story of Esau
selling his birthright to his brother, Jacob. The two panels of Isaac & Rebekah therefore
serve as a reminder of who Isaac marries, and who the mother of Esau and Joseph is. The
other purpose of the etching could be to emphasise the leadership of Abraham, and to
reiterate his place as YHWH's chosen figurehead on earth. Again, this ties in with the

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[179] A. Pullan, "Needlework and Moral Instruction in English Seventeenth-Century Households: The Case of
Rebecca," in *Studies in Church History: Religion and the Household,* ed. J. Doran et al. (Suffolk: The
Boydell Press, 2014), p. 256.
[180] Ibid,

concept of absolute monarchy so popular with some royalists, and is a throwback to Hobbesian philosophy discussed earlier in this chapter.

Although not one of Hollar's most renowned works, the *Abraham* series is a beautiful amalgamation of biblical narrative and seventeenth century politics and culture. It is also a fine example of image illustrated by text, and vice versa. Chapter Three will now consider the implications of reading the series of panels as a whole, and how the series design may have aided interpretation of Scripture for those people approaching the Bible outside of the church.

IV. Chapter Three: On Reading the Panels as a Sequence

11. Formats and Audience Reception

The Abraham series is an interesting work in many ways, but none more so than the fact that the format means it can be experienced in several different ways: (a) individual, stand-alone panels, (b) as the whole sequence of sixteen panels, with or (c) without the corresponding biblical text, and (d) a performance, resulting from a combination of oral recitation and images. In (a), each panel is cut out and separated from the sequence by the reader, who pastes them into a Bible or elsewhere. The single panel becomes disconnected from the rest of the panels, and is used to highlight certain texts. This approach means the reader engages more with the text than the image, since the text situates the image in context which helps the reader understand the story being depicted. The image is anchored by the text, whereby "the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image […] remote control(ing) him towards a meaning chosen in advance."[181] Of course the reader could view a panel by itself without the corresponding scripture, but unless the reader is very familiar with the Abraham narrative, this removes context and makes the panel harder to read. It becomes much more difficult to construe the meaning or theme of the image when it stands alone, because "text and image stand in a complementary relationship […] and the unity of the message is realised at [the] level of story, the anecdote, the digesis."[182] The act of 'reading' a stand-alone panel becomes less about the reader engaging with the image and more about engaging with the text which is helpful if the panels are being used as visual aids to literacy where the end goal is to learn how to read words rather than decipher images.

The second and third approach to reading the panels is to keep the sheet whole and undivided so that the panels are read as sequential art with (b) or without (c) the corresponding biblical text. In this format, the Abraham series (and later, the Jacob series) resembles a comic-strip. That is, the series is composed of "juxtaposed… images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic

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[181] R. Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in: S. Heath (ed. and trans.) *Image, Music, Text.* Hill and Wang: New York, 1977. pp. 39-40.
[182] Ibid, p. 41.

response in the viewer."[183] To the reader, the sequence of panels as a whole conveys the most memorable points of the Abraham story which are also the main points of the chiastic structure of the story: Abraham's challenge to leave his home (Genesis 12:1-3), wife-sister story (12:10-13:1), separation from Lot (13:2-18), the covenant narratives (15:1-21) and so forth, up to the new generation of his family beginning with the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah (Chapter 24). The aesthetic response identified by McCloud is the set of principles underlying the comic book format. Predominantly, this is the response from the reader. Like the majority of comic books, the reader engages with the sequential images by filling in the gaps for themselves, relying on memory, imagination and prior knowledge of the Abraham story to do so. The reader understands, for example, that between Panels 4 and 5 of the series ("Abraham and Lot Separate" and "Abraham pursues ye Kings and beats them"), Lot sets up home on the plains of Jordan and Abraham settles in Mamre at Hebron. Lot is then captured by the four kings and a messenger relays the bad news to Abraham. Abraham pursues the captors and rescues his nephew. None of that is included in the images or the captions, but the reader can place his own memory of the story in to the gutter between the panels to help understand the sequence of action within the panels. This approach is helped by reading the panels alongside the biblical text, but unlike the first approach (a), biblical text is not as essential for the reader to understand the narrative. Without the text, the reader can still understand the main messages and themes of the narrative, so long as they have some prior knowledge of Genesis 12-24.

The fourth approach, (d), does not rely so much on prior knowledge of the story. We know the images were probably created as visual aids to reading the Bible, and this probably means that they were intended to be bought by people learning how to read, or by those teaching others how to read. They may also have been used by households where one or two people could read, and were therefore in charge of reading the Bible out loud to other members of the household (including servants) to ensure everybody had contact with Scripture on a regular basis.[184] Listening to somebody reading Scripture aloud while simultaneously viewing these images creates a performance of the text, an audio-visual demonstration of the Word. There is no solid evidence that combining oral recitals of the Bible with displays of biblical images was a common occurrence, but there is also nothing to suggest that these visual aids were not used in such imaginative ways to encourage

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[183] S. McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art,* HarperPerennial: New York, 1993, p. 9.
[184] Jensen, *"Simply" Reading the Geneva Bible*, p. 43.

learning and understanding in the household. The images may have been used not just as visual aids to reading, but as props to a performance.

The close reading of each individual panel in Chapter Two allowed for an extensive analysis of themes and messages within each image. However Green suggests that biblical illustrations were regularly found adorning the walls in public places such as inns, providing the public with access to Scripture in a visual form outside a church setting. He mentions single-sided sheets and short tracts on Scripture as examples of 'cheap print' produced for "less experienced or demanding readers."[185] These normally combined Scripture with images and were used to highlight certain texts showing God punishing vice and rewarding virtue, normally from the historical books of the Bible rather than the Prophetic books.[186] The single-sided sheets were 'cheap woodcuts' and other low-cost prints, examples of which we have already seen in Chapter Two. These examples, along with Hollar's Abraham and Jacob series which survive today in various institutions throughout the world, all appear in full-sheet formats, undivided and as a sequence of panels. There is a clear argument, then, that at least some readers who owned these prints viewed them as a sequence rather than as individual, stand-alone panels, therefore reading them as a modern comic book reader experiences a comic or graphic novel.

This is significant because of the way readers interact with this medium. Will Eisner explains:

> The reading process in comics is an extension of text. In text alone the process of reading involves word-to-image conversion. Comics accelerate that by providing the image. When properly executed, it goes beyond conversion and speed and becomes a seamless whole.[187]

Eisner was a prominent comic artist and writer between 1936 until the early 2000s, and he used his experience to teach and write on the subject of comic formats and audience response. His in-depth understanding of this modern medium applies to Hollar's series, even though they were etched centuries before the modern comic book came into existence. Hollar has provided the readers of the Abraham series with that same tool for deciphering meaning: Image. In the Abraham series, the relationship between the image, the text (both in and above the panels), *and* the Biblical text corresponding to the image accelerates the process of understanding the message behind the panel. From the beginning, the tools are there to help the reader understand the point of the panel. Eisner's

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[185] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 2-26.
[186] Ibid, pp. 105-166.
[187] W. Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling,* Poorhouse Press: Florida, 1996, p. 5.

assessment is based upon the understanding that text-image narratives rely upon "a visual experience common to both creator and audience."[188] This has been confirmed by comic theorist Scott McCloud who recognises that while common experience is important between the creator and the audience, this is difficult to attain because the audience reinterprets the narrative according to their own needs.[189]

The *Abraham* series relies on the common visual experience recognised by both creator and audience. At the time of their creation, the stories were entrenched into the public consciousness, familiar to the masses.[190] That reason alone means it is probable that Hollar's etchings would have been familiar to the public. Although he may not have known it, Hollar was also adhering to a code of visual imagery which made the images easy to identify. It is this code that has provided much of the common ground between the artist and his audience in terms of understanding the image. Readers of the work can instantly recognise certain postures such as the figure of Abraham prostrate in prayer or in receiving blessings (Panels 1, 2, 9 and 10), shapes such as Hebrew letters representing the divine which would otherwise have been alien to them (Panels 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9), and compositions such as the generic 'Sacrifice of Isaac' arrangement which was prevalent in art from the fourteenth-century onwards (Panel 14). All these visual clues combine to create a language of symbols, a 'common language' as Eisner and McCloud would argue.[191] This common language is the basis of text-image narratives and the reason they are understood differently from a narrative based entirely in text.

> The format of comics presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills. The regimens of art […] and the regimens of literature become superimposed upon each other. The reading of a graphic novel is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit.[192]

Again, although Eisner writes about contemporary comics and graphic novels, the principles apply to the majority of text-image narratives throughout history, including Hollar's *Abraham* and *Jacob* series'. Thus we see that Hollar's panel-based etchings work on two levels as visual aids to the written word in the mid-seventeenth century: firstly, as a visual stimulus or 'memory aid' to remind the reader of the story they are reading from the Bible, and secondly as an exercise in interpreting images and words together in a

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[188] W. Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*: *Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist,* W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2008, p. 1.
[189] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, pp. 194-195.
[190] Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, pp. 204-215.
[191] See: Eisner, *Comics & Sequential Art,* pp. 8-10; McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, pp. 27-59.
[192] Eisner, *Comics & Sequential Art*, p. 2.

narrative.[193] This act of interpretation relies on deciphering the code of symbols prevalent in art as well as reading the image with Scripture in order to decode the message of the panel/text. At a time in history when people were beginning to read (and interpret) the Bible for themselves away from the Church, creating images to sit alongside biblical texts aided the interpretation for the reader, giving them a chance to perhaps reach their own conclusions. Reading the entire sequence of panels as opposed to a single panel was the best option for those learning to read and understand biblical messages and themes.

12. Comparisons with other Hollar Etchings

Hollar's expansive folio of work contains a number of works which include writing within or around their images. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a tradition in art, in which it was common for artists to annotate or label their work.[194] Left, for example, is an etching by Hollar of the Trial of the Earl of Strafford, 1641 (Fig 3.1). Hollar individually labels the central characters in the etching with a letter. The key at the bottom then tells the viewer who that figure is. This style of documenting event meant that important events were recorded in both a visual and a written style.

Fig 3.1: *The Trial of the Earl of Strafford*, 1641 (State i).

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[193] Kunzle has written extensively on the early history of comics and comic strips, and comments on the use of aids in Vol. 1 of *The Early Comic Strip*.

[194] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 24.
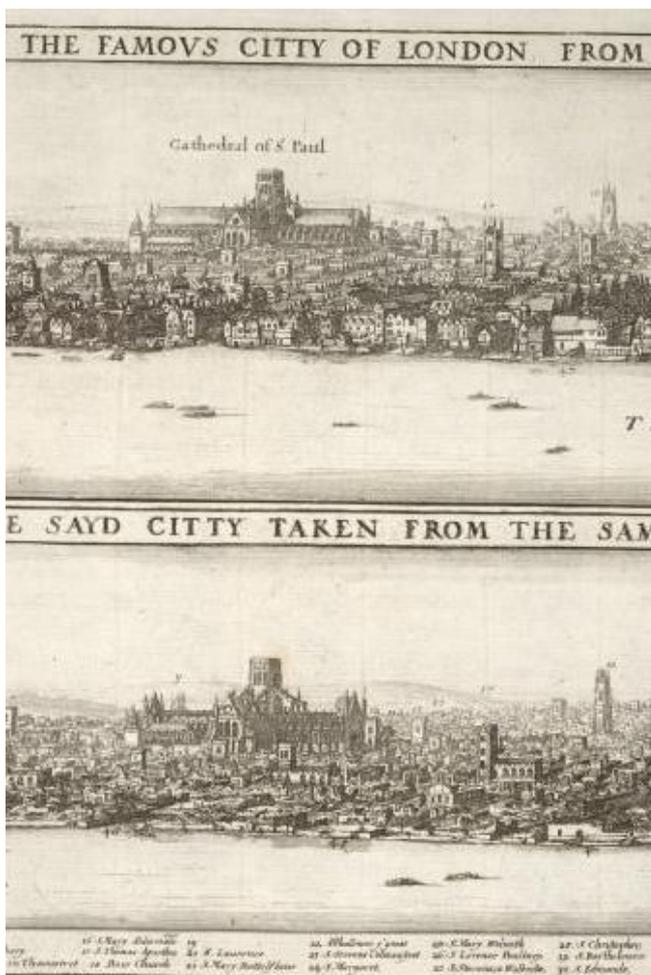
Fig 3.2: Detail from *London – Before and After the Fire, 1666*, (State ii).

Other examples of this style include Hollar's etchings of the trial of Archbishop Laud in 1643, and of Laud's subsequent execution in the same year. Many of his maps also contain similar annotations, specifically his impressive panorama views of London which show the city skyline before and after the fire of 1666, denoting specific buildings and areas in the city (Fig 3.2). However these images differ from the Abraham and Jacob series' in that they stand alone without reference to any other written document. They are not designed to be read, in conjunction with a text, but exist as a pictorial record of the event, aided by the inscriptions within the images. The same principle applies to Hollar's cityscapes and landscapes: they were created to be maps of the area, to provide certain information for the reader but not explicitly to be read alongside a specific text. All the information required is included in the etching. Kunzle suggests this is an important element of distinguishing between stories told through pictures and stories complimented by pictures:

> There is a distinction […] between imagery which illustrates a text and imagery which is clarified by a text. It is often difficult to determine in a specific instance the exact relationship between image and text and which came first, but it is usually clear which carries the burden of the narrative.[195]

He goes on to propose that those narratives which are predominantly image over text are to be defined as, broadly speaking, a "comic strip" or as McCloud would have it, a piece of sequential art. Hollar's execution and trial etchings, and his maps fall in to the category of imagery clarified by a text. His Abraham and Jacob series, however, seem to blur the distinction. On the one hand, they are predominantly made up of image with very little text

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[195] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip,* p. 2.

included in the actual etching. On the other hand they are clearly meant to illustrate a biblical text which is to be read alongside the images even if it is not included in the etching in its complete form. As previously argued, the images can be read without the biblical text as long as the reader has prior knowledge of the subject, therefore the Abraham and Jacob series' do fall in to the "comic strip" category defined by Kunzle.

In his book detailing the history of the comic strip, Kunzle refers to one of Hollar's etchings as an early example of the medium. Described by Kunzle as "part map, part battle scene and part political strip narrative,"[196] the etching *Map of England and view of Prague with scenes of the beginning of the Civil War,* dating from c.1652 (Fig 3.3) is made up of two distinct sections. On the left is a map of England which shows the major battle areas of the Civil War. On the right is a bird's eye view of Prague, besieged by the Imperial Army. Twelve small squares head the design, each showing a different scene from the beginning of the civil war in Prague. The piece is overtly political. Pennington suggests:

> The significance of this design is the influence on England of the Stuart involvement in European affairs as a consequence of the support given to Frederick, the son in law of James I, a baneful influence symbolised by the black Imperial eagle in the centre of the design.[197]

Hollar was not a political artist, but the consequences of having witnessed war, famine and disease first hand shine through in this piece. The reason it is significant, however, is not the political message it expounds, but the format in which it has been drawn, which is comparable to the *Abraham* and *Jacob* series. Hollar relies on the interplay between image and word in the etching, combining map and narrative strip in what is supposedly a unique pairing according to Kunzle.[198] The combination is confusing to read, since, "in order to read the story in chronological sequence, we must begin on the right side, then move toward the left, at which point we are obliged to pass back and forth between map and narrative border."[199] This is similar to the Panels 4, 7, 8, 12 and 14 from the *Abraham* series, in which the images read from right-to-left, thus confusing the reader who reads all of the other panels in the 'normal' left-to-right' manner. In *Map of England and view of Prague with scenes of the beginning of the Civil War*, Kunzle describes how the reader is obliged to "pass back and forth between map and narrative border", again similar to the *Abraham* series where the reader is compelled to read the caption, cross to the image and then pass over to the biblical scripture to which the image pertains. This confusing system

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[196] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip,* p. 126.
[197] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 85.
[198] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, p. 26.
[199] Ibid, pp. 126-127.

of reading is not the easiest to master and not perhaps the best way to illustrate text for the illiterate to begin to read. Kunzle suggests that the curious arrangement in the civil war map reflects either Hollar's confused memory of events (perhaps mixing up the events from the civil war in Prague with the English Civil War) or his lack of concern with regards to presenting the correct order of events.[200]


Fig 3.3: *Map of England and view of Prague with scenes of the beginning of the Civil War,* c.1652 (State unknown).

However, with no explanation as to why Hollar might 'not care' about the arrangement, it is hard to accept that explanation. Hollar was a hard-working etcher who devoted his life to his craft and as there is no evidence that the civil war map was commissioned, Hollar designed and created it himself. Perhaps it is more likely that his memory of events was confused and this is why the etching is disordered. In a further illuminating comment on this work, Kunzle suggests:

> Hollar has not made his political purpose clear, for while he is documenting the course of the Civil Wars and celebrating the Puritan victory on the one hand, he has on the other hand laid equal accent on the Bohemian wars of thirty years before.[201]

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[200] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, p. 127.
[201] Ibid.

In Chapter One, Section Two concerning Hollar's religious leanings, it was shown that he was careful not to allow his personal views to come across in his work. Instead he often comes across as ambivalent and unclear which is the case in the civil war map, and is possibly also the case in the *Abraham* series as well. It is unclear as to where the ambiguity stems from: his personal feelings on the Abraham story, his feelings towards religion on a whole, or his uncertainty as to how to read the story. We know from physical evidence that Hollar wrote letters to his peers and that he was able to read and write,[202] but there is very little evidence to suggest how well he was educated, even though he was the son of an Imperial Official. He may have had enough knowledge from a Latin-based education to read the Abraham story for himself, or he may have derived his knowledge of the story from public readings (in a church), or from friends. It is unclear. The fact that Hollar probably did not write the text on the etchings, either in the Latin (State i) or in the English (State ii) suggests, however, that Hollar may not have been very confident in his own writing skills. Green suggests that it was the 'middling sort', those "below the gentry but above husbandmen and labourers with little or no capital but their own labour" who constituted a "large and rapidly expanding pool of readers,"[203] and it is possible that Hollar himself fell in to this category of society and may have been one of those 'new' readers.

13. *The Jacob Series and Other Genesis Narratives by Hollar*

If it is the case that Hollar reflected the difficulty of the text in his artwork, we may be able to find other clues in his other Genesis-related work. Section 13 will then examine comparisons from both his favourite artists and his contemporaries. From Hollar's portfolio, the first image for comparison is the sister to the *Abraham* series. Probably etched around the same time as *Abraham,* the "Jacob & Joseph" series is in exactly the same format: a sixteen panel comic-strip narrative with captions along the top of each panel, directing the reader to the corresponding biblical text (Fig 1.2). These captions are much less specific, however, referencing entire chapters instead of the precise verse as in *Abraham.* Panel 1, for example, is captioned "*Esau sells his Birthright. Gen. 25.*" The image is of Jacob handing Esau a bowl of stew in exchange for his birthright which occurs

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[202] See: Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 416 for example, concerning letters written from Hollar to William Dugdale.
[203] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 34-35.

in 25:29-33. If unfamiliar with this narrative, the reader would have to read through the entirety of Chapter 25 in order to find the scene to which the image corresponds. For the reader, this encourages an even closer reading of the biblical text to match up the image to the verse; however this in turn means the reader spends less time with the image. This is a case of imagery being clarified by a text.

Fig 1.2: *The Jacob & Joseph Series,* Date unknown, (State ii).

In terms of the content, Panels 1, 9 and 11 are read from right-to-left, but they are not as disjointed as the Abraham panels read in that format. In fact, the *Jacob* series is altogether more detailed, refined and ordered than its partner and therefore less confusing for the reader. Even the inscriptions along the top are neater, if less informative. More attention has been paid to the landscapes, backgrounds are clearer and the details of buildings, clothing and even facial expressions are more polished. It appears more time has been spent on the panels in this series as opposed to *Abraham*. However, as previously suggested, less time has been spent on the text which accompanies the images, and not just in the captions. Entirely absent from this series is the inclusion of any speech bubbles. Only once do we see the Tetragrammaton, in Panel 4: *Jacob's Vision of a Ladder. Gen 28.,* where it appears at the top of the ladder extending to the heavens. The lack of direct references to YHWH reflects the content of the Jacob and Joseph narratives in Scripture,

where YHWH has less of a 'hands-on' role with the figures. Abraham is one of the last figures in Scripture to enjoy such a close relationship with YHWH. The lack of speech bubbles, however, is slightly more confusing.

Using speech bubbles in comic strips (or other formats) is a way of directing the reader to a specific message, normally encased in the pronouncement of the character speaking. As Grove observes:

> For bubbles to be used a speaker, generally human, is required, and this may be a practical reason why the phenomenon seems most common in religious works […] The 'speech' itself tends to be an appropriations of citations from the Scriptures (or the Ancients) rather than an attempt to create an *ad hoc* imaginary discourse.[204]

This is precisely the manner in which Hollar employs speech bubbles in the *Abraham* series: to highlight a specific character and a particular excerpt from a religious narrative. Whenever speech is delivered in the series, it is always between YHWH and Abraham and never any of the 'lesser' characters thus further emphasising the idea of a 'conversation' between these two and cementing Abraham's special relationship with YHWH, again according to Hobbes' writings on the subject discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Conversely, the lack of speech bubbles in the *Jacob* series suggests either that there are no significant messages to impart to the reader or simply that Hollar was reflecting the loss of a close relationship between YHWH and humanity. The latter is most probable.

Kunzle suggests that speech bubbles were increasingly used during the seventeenth-century but were always accompanied with captions of commentary; seldom were they the only means of communicating information.[205] This is true of Hollar's work, as we have seen in the *Abraham* series. Outside these works, however, the only other etching in Hollar's catalogue of work which contains a passing resemblance to speech bubbles is his etching of *Satterday*, from his folio of etchings based on the

Fig 3.4: Detail from *Satterday,* Date unknown (State i).

[204] L. Grove, "Emblems with Speech Bubbles," in *Visual Words and Verbal Pictures: Essays in Honour of Michael Bath,* P. Davidson & A. Saunders (Ed.), Glasgow Emblem Studies: Glasgow, 2005, p. 98.
[205] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, pp. 2-3.

week of Creation (Fig 3.4). Here, Adam and Eve are seen calling out the name of YHWH surrounded by animals. It is unclear as to why they are calling the divine name as it is not part of the Creation narrative in scriptures. However, the speech bubbles in this image are vastly different to those appearing in the *Abraham* series: they are in fact more reminiscent of the type of speech bubbles seen in modern comic books, known as "scream" balloons. These are used to indicate that a character is screaming or shouting, and they normally consist of a spiky outline with larger or bolder lettering inside.[206] The act of shouting comes across in the *Satterday* etching through the use of the spiky balloon and large, bold lettering. Perhaps this is a way of distinguishing the humans from the animals which surround them, thus showing humanity's dominance over the animal kingdom suggested in Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:19-20. There are no other Genesis-based etchings which include the use of speech bubbles or that show direct speech in any other form.

Hollar did create alternative versions of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:14-19) and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18) away from the *Abraham* series (see Fig 3.5 and Fig 3.6). Pennington suggests they belong to a collection entitled *"Seven double illustrations to Genesis"* which were also originally intended to be used as Bible illustrations.[207] These images are accompanied by one caption at the top for both images: in this case "*Hagar GEN: XXI XXII Abraham,*"

Fig 3.5: *Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac,* Date unknown (State ii).

Fig 3.6: *Hagar and the Sacrifice of Isaac,* Date unknown (State ii).

[206] S. Rhoades, *Comic Books: How the Industry Works,* Peter Lang Publishing Inc.: New York, 2008, p. 131.
[207] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 6.

Neither contain speech bubbles as in *Abraham,* but each has text below the images which is much more elaborate than the simple references to scripture in our panels. In fact these are probablydirect quotes of Scripture and while the source is not noted, it is remarkably similar to the translation in the King James Bible of 1611 (see Table 3.1 below).

King James Version of Genesis 21:14-19	Hollar's text underneath the *Hagar* image pertaining to Genesis 21:14-19:
16 **And she went, and sate her downe ouer against a good way off, as it were a bow shoot**: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And shee sate ouer against and lift vp her voice and wept.	16 And shee went, and sate her downe against him, a good way off, as it were a bow shoote etc.
17 And God hear the voice of the lad, **and the Angel of God called to Hagar** out of heauen, and said vnto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? feare not: for God hath heard the voice of the ladde, where he is.	17 and y Angell of the Lord called to Hagar: etc.
18 Arise, lift vp the lad, and hold him in thine hand: for I will make him a great nation.	
19 **And God opened her eyes, and saw a well of water**, and shee went, and filled the bottle with water, and gaue the ladde drinke.	19 and god opened her eyes, & shee saw a well of water etc.
King James Version of Genesis 22:1-18:	**Hollar's text underneath the *Hagar* image pertaining to Genesis 22:1-18:**
10 And Abraham stretched foorth his hand, and tooke the knife to slay his sonne	10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and tooke the knife to slay his Sonne
11 And the Angel of the LORD called vnto him out of heauen and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here am I.	11 And the Angell of the Lord called vnto him etc.
12 And he said, Lay not thine hand vpon the lad, neither do thou any thing vnto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withhelde thy sonne, thine onely sonne from mee.	12 And hee said, lay not thine hand vpon the Lad

Table 3-1*: Similarities between the text of the KJV and Hollar's wording underneath Fig 3.5 & Fig 3.6.*

From the 1630s onwards, the King James Bible was by far the most popular version of the Bible in England, replacing the Geneva Bible. Parish churches were required to own and use a copy of the KJV,[208] and most citizens preferred it to the more cumbersome Geneva Bible and its margins full of notes and suggestions.[209] For Hollar (or another hand) to annotate his etchings with this version makes sense. The more comprehensive captions make the images easier to understand for the reader. By including the scripture alongside the image, the reader is not forced to pass back and forth between a Bible and the etching so on that point these images surpass the *Abraham* and *Jacob* series and probably makes these images a more useful aid to reading and understanding Scripture than those panels. Notably, however, the captions below Fig 3.5 and Fig 3.6 fail to include any direct speech: at the point where the Angel of the Lord speaks to Hagar and Abraham, Hollar has written 'etc.' thus forcing the reader to fill in the blanks. From these examples, it is clear to see that combining image with text was a common occurrence in Hollar's work. While Fig 3.5 and 3.6 supposedly belong to their own series of biblical illustrations, they survive only as individual, standalone panels and not as a complete set. This sets the *Abraham* and *Jacob* series' apart from Hollar's other biblical illustrations, unique in their format and in their demonstration of the relationship between text and image.

14. Sources of Inspiration

It is impossible to identify all the artists Hollar was in direct contact with during his life, but by looking at similar images by artists around the same time, who practiced in London and Antwerp (and possibly in Germany and the Lowlands during Hollar's earlier years), we may draw loose comparisons to Hollar's work. To this end, it is also important to consider works by the most influential artists in his life and so firstly, we will look at Dürer. There are very few prints of Dürer's which combine text and image, or which concern Old Testament narratives. Dürer's influence on Hollar can mainly be seen in his costume studies, animal studies and the occasional similarity in composition. For example, Dürer's woodcut of *Hrotsvit presents Emperor Otto the Great with her Gesta Oddonis,*

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[208] The KJV Bible would have been used for readings at matins and evensong, but the weekly readings for the Eucharist in the Prayer book were not from the KJV. Thanks are due to Dr. C. Methuen for this point.
[209] M. Bragg, *The Book of Books: The Radical Impact of the King James Bible 1611-2011* (Hodder & Stoughton: London), Chapter 5: The Four Companies.

1501 (Fig. 3.7) may have had a direct influence on the manner in which Hollar depicted figures of authority. When compared to Panel 3 *(Pharaoh restores Abraham his Wife),* Panel 12 *(Abimelech rebuketh Abraham)* and Panel 15 *(Abraham sends his Servant to take a Wife for Isaac),* Dürer's woodcut serves as a blueprint for composition and style. The authoritative figures are always seated, and the subservient figures are grouped around in acts of praise, obedience and servility. Other works by Dürer in a similar style include *Pilate Washing his Hands* (1512) which depicts a critical moment from the Passion of Christ: the point at which Jesus' Jesus' crucifixion was set. Pilate is seated and being tended

Fig 3.7: *Hrotsvit presents Emperor Otto the Great with her 'Gesta Oddonis,'* Albrecht Dürer, 1501.

to by his servant who washes his hands for him. Another woodcut, *Christ before Herod* (1509) again shows the authority figure seated, with Christ before him ready to be judged and surrounded by Herod's servants. This tradition of portraying figures of authority in seated positions is obviously something Hollar has picked up and applied within his own art. It allows viewers of his work to immediately recognise who holds the power in the images, thus helping them to interpret the image more accurately. Two other prints by Dürer bear a resemblance to some of the imagery used in *Abraham:* firstly, *St Jerome Penitent in the* Wilderness (c.1496), and secondly, *Agony in the Garden* (1508). These images (Fig 3.8 and 3.9 below) are beautiful representations of their subject matter and there are several panels in *Abraham* which may draw inspiration from these two prints.

Fig 3.8: *St. Jerome Penitent in the Wilderness*, Albrecht Dürer, c.1496.

Fig 3.9: *Agony in the Garden,* Albrecht Dürer, 1508.

Although Hollar's prints are much less detailed than these images, his figures are very similar in posture and style to those in the Dürer prints. *St Jerome Penitent in the Wilderness* shows the figure of Jerome holding a stone in his right hand, ready to strike at his chest in penance. He was a popular saint in the sixteenth century, probably because he was known as the translator of the Vulgate, and makes an appearance in many drawings and paintings of the time. The position of Jerome is similar to the figure of Abraham in Panels 1 and 2 of *Abraham*: both are kneeling as if in prayer, gazing skywards towards their god in emotional displays of supplication and atonement. This is also true of the figure of Christ in *Agony in the Garden*. The extra layer of meaning within the Jerome etching however, is that he was the figure largely responsible for the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible in the fourth century, a translation which revised earlier Latin compilations of biblical texts into a single version of the Bible. It remained the definitive version of the Bible for over a thousand years, until the Protestant Reformation when various other translations were made, as discussed in Chapter One. Jerome continued to be honoured by the Catholics but was not revered by Protestants who preferred their own translations of the Bible.[210] Hollar's panels are but another layer of interpretation designed for those reading

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[210] Thanks are due to Dr. C. Methuen for this point.

the Bible for themselves outside of the church. It is apt, then, if he was inspired by Durer's etching of St Jerome in his own visualisation of the Word.

Having already discussed etchings drawn in a similar fashion to the *Abraham* series in Chapter One, Section 5,[211] it would be useful to consider other possible influences on Hollar's work. Pennington suggests:

> It is possible that Hollar was influenced by the similar small illustrations, woodcuts, in some of the small Bibles printed by Jean de Tournes […] And Holbein had designed illustrations for the Old Testament which were cut by Lützelberger. There was an alphabet recounting the story of Jacob's journey into Egypt and the story of Joseph.[212]

Indeed he is quite accurate in his suggestion. The Bibles printed by Jean de Tournes have already been cited as inspiration to Hollar's work when we examined Panel 6: *Melchizedek receives Abraham*, and Panel 13: *Abraham's Feast when Isaac was Weaned*.[213] Other images from the *Quadrins historiques de la Bible* which bear remarkable similarity to Hollar's series include those which depict the Rebekah narrative (Panels 15 and 16 in the *Abraham* series) and the depiction of Abram and Lot separating (Panel 4). These images are not as similar as the first two comparisons, but there are definite similarities in the landscape, composition and figures.[214] Pennington also makes mentions of Hans Holbein's "illustrations for the Old Testament, cut by Lützelberger," which presumably refers to the 1547 manuscript *Icones historiarum Veteris Testamenti* as a source of inspiration. Again, Pennington's observations seem probable, even though Holbein only created two prints relating to the Abraham narrative, concerning the Genesis 18 and 22 respectively. The influence of these two prints can indeed be seen in Hollar's corresponding panels (see Fig 2.17 & 3.10, 2.25 & 3.11 below for comparison).

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[211] With particular reference to the etchings by Pieter Hendricksz. Schutz, presented by van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 45.
[212] Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 3.
[213] See Fig. 2.9 and 2.22
[214] This discussion refers to a version of the *Quadrains historiques de la Bible* held in the Glasgow University Library, shelf mark: Sp. Coll S. M. 824.

Fig 2.17: Panel 10: *Abraham entertains three Angels*.

Fig 3.10: *Abraham and the Three Angels, Genesis xviii,* Hans Holbein the Younger (1547).

Fig 2.25: Panel 14, *Abraham going to offer Isaac.*

Fig. 3.11: *Abraham's Sacrifice, Genesis xxii,* Hans Holbein the Younger, 1547.

Echoes of Holbein's print can be seen in Hollar's panel: the figure of Abraham kneeling in Fig. 3.10 is similar to Abraham in the background of Hollar's etching. Both have Sarah in the doorway, awaiting Abraham's instruction. Stylistically, both images rely on simple lines and understated shading in order to make the narrative clear and easy to understand. While these two images are not identical, there are enough similarities to suggest that Hollar was perhaps influenced by this set of Old Testament prints. This is further supported by the fact that both Hollar's and Holbein's depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac are more or less matching to one another, even down to the detail of the ram caught in the thicket. This duplication suggests Hollar was very much aware of Holbein's prints, and had indeed taken direct inspiration from them to use in his own series, probably printed almost one hundred years later.

Dürer, Holbein the Younger and Salomon were but a few of the names to inspire Hollar, both in his *Abraham* series and his other works. Of course other versions of illustrated Bibles existed which may have proved an influence, for example: *Den Bible tgeheele Oude ende Nieuwe Testament*, otherwise known as the 'Vorsterman Bible' was printed in Antwerp in 1528,[215] and the Visscher publishing house was responsible for several picture Bibles during its many years in business.[216] Aside from picture Bibles, there were plenty of other manuscripts and documents which amalgamated text with image: Emblem books were common and popular throughout Europe but especially in France, and often contained images very similar to those Hollar produced for *Abraham*.[217] Andrea Alciato's *Les Emblemes* printed by Jean II de Tournes in Geneva (1615) is a fine example of this.[218] These examples serve as a small representation of the wealth of influential materials which may have affected Hollar and his artistic choices. This study has not begun to touch on the range of Protestant and Catholic propaganda materials which were widely distributed throughout the beginnings of the civil war in England, nor the extensive scope of influences Hollar may have encountered during his time in Antwerp, arguably the printmaking capital of the world at that point in time. However the aim of this section was to document which influences directly affected Hollar's work, in particular the *Abraham* series, not to provide a record of all artists working during Hollar's time who may or not

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[215] A version of *Den Bible tgeheele Oude ende Nieuwe Testament,* Shelf Mark: Sp. Coll Euing Dw-d.12 (University of Glasgow Library) was used for this reference.

[216] Van der Coelen, *Patriarchs, Angels & Prophets*, p. 5.

[217] For a list of examples of Emblem books printed in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, see: http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/books.php.

[218] "Alciato, Andrea: *Les Emblemes [PART TWO]* (1615)" in: *French Emblems at Glasgow*, Glasgow University Emblem Website, http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/contents.php?id=FALe (September, 2014).

have provided him with inspiration. Hollar spent more than fifty years working in the print-world and as such, inspiration could have visited him from any avenue. The *Abraham* series, (along with the *Jacob* series) were but a very small, albeit a very interesting, part of his long career.

V. Conclusion

Hollar's *Abraham* series must be considered an early example of a comic strip which, especially when read in sequence as opposed to individual panels, aided readers in interpreting and understanding biblical Scripture outside of a church setting. The series accomplishes this in many ways, format, composition and the incorporation of text with image being the most important. The series has hitherto gone undocumented as an early version of a comic strip but this thesis has shown that it should be classed as such, for the following reasons.

Chapter Three discussed three different definitions of comic strips. Will Eisner coined the term "Sequential Art" in 1985 to describe the medium, and he analysed the format of the comic strip arguing that the reader is "required to exercise both visual and interpretive skills" due to the interplay of text and image in comics.[219] Scott McCloud defines them as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer."[220] David Kunzle states that for something to be considered a comic strip, it must be a sequence of images with a preponderance of image over text. It must also be produced in a medium which is quick and easy to reproduce (e.g. a 'mass medium') and the sequence itself must tell a story which is both moral and topical.[221] Both works by McCloud and Eisner are considered "touchstones" which centre upon "a fresh appreciation for the distinctive properties that set comics apart from other mediums,"[222] and Kunzle is widely acknowledged as an authority on comics' history owing to his "massively researched and encyclopaedic two-volume *History of the Comic Strip* (1973, 1990) which covered countless European artists who did sequential visual stories from the end of the Middle Ages to the end of the nineteenth century."[223]

Considering their widely-acknowledged authority on the subject of comics, it is highly appropriate to use the three definitions outlined above as a framework when considering Hollar's *Abraham* series as an early example of a comic strip. It is clear that *Abraham* fits

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[219] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, p. 2.
[220] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, p. 9.
[221] Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, p. 2.
[222] J. Heer & K. Worcester, "Introduction." in J. Heer, & K. Worcester (eds.), *A Comics Studies Reader,* University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, 2009, p. xiv.
[223] Ibid, p. 13.

all of the above criteria; it is a deliberate sequence of images juxtaposed with text and with a prevalence of image over word. It both conveys information (about biblical narrative) and it provokes a response from the viewer who must apply their own interpretive skills to the etching in order to understand the message relayed by text and image as a whole. The series was originally drawn on copper-plate which lends itself well to quick and easy reproduction, and quite clearly the story which is depicted is moral (of a religious nature) and topical, owing to the relationship and correlation between the themes in the narrative and political and social occurrences in the seventeenth century (namely the themes of Covenant and Land, as well as the use of Abraham as a symbol of religious devotion and an emblem of hospitality). The original purpose of the etching, according to Pennington, was to serve as a visual aid to reading the Bible. Pennington suggests that it was probably intended that the etching would be cut into individual panels and stuck in to personal Bibles; therefore one could argue that the etching is not an example of sequential art as it was not intended to be viewed as a whole series in one go. However, the process of creating the etching meant it was originally drawn as a whole narrative; Hollar had to design the panels as a sequence ensuring the story followed on from the last panel. Therefore during the initial design, the series was designed as a piece of sequential art and as such should be viewed as one. Furthermore, all surviving copies of the etching series are in full-sheet formats,[224] therefore the series clearly is an early example of a comic-strip and should be given full consideration as such in any volumes of work charting the early history of comic strips.

The interplay of text and image in the *Abraham* series provides readers with the necessary tools required to interpret the panels accordingly. Chapters Two and Three extensively discussed how the relationship between the two helped the audience to read and understand Scripture and as such apply the Word of God to their own lives, outside of a church setting and without reliance upon members of the clergy or priesthood to clarify themes and messages for new readers. Creating images in combination with text was not a new concept in the seventeenth century; Kunzle, among others, has demonstrated the rich history of the format as far back as the 1450s. However Hollar uses it to good effect in *Abraham* by presenting the information in clear, defined, successive panels which replicates the natural process of reading text from left-to-right, and down the page. As a visual aid for biblical interpretation, this format is successful both in full-sheet format and if the panels are displayed individually as standalone images. However the latter does place

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[224] See Introduction, p. 7, footnote 1 for full details of surviving copies of the *Abraham* series.

an expectation on the reader having good prior knowledge of the biblical narrative in order to understand the image, whereas reading the series as whole does make it easier for the reader to understand and follow. Presenting an ancient text in what would have been an innovative and fresh interpretation not only aided literacy and understanding, but also encouraged readers to apply their own interpretations to the text, and in doing so relate biblical narratives more closely to their everyday lives and their personal needs. It is little wonder that in the years following the publication of visual aids such as this, the business of publishing biblical commentaries increased which presented different understandings of Scripture by readers accessing the Bible outside of a church setting for the first time.

Chapter One of this thesis discussed Wenceslaus Hollar's religious leanings at length. The point was made that the artist was careful never to pigeonhole himself into specific categories, and this was probably in order to make himself attractive to potential clients of any belief or faith system. Having said that, the *Abraham* series carries overtones of Hollar's beliefs, whether intended or not. Evidence suggest he was most probably Catholic, born into an Utraquist tradition which later aligned itself with Catholicism. Furthermore, Hollar's sympathies also lay with the Royalists before, during and after the civil war of England in the 1640s. Close analysis of the individual panels in the *Abraham* series, as well as an examination of the series as a whole shows a glimmer of Hollar's religious and political loyalties. The overarching theme in the Abraham narrative, both in Scripture and in Hollar's series is that of the Covenant. This covenant between YHWH and his most faithful servant ensured Abraham became a Father of Nations, and a figurehead of God's people on earth. This ancient promise is brought to mind in 1643 by the signing of the *Solemn League and Covenant* between English Parliamentarians and Scottish Covenanters. This covenant eventually played its part in the execution of Charles 1 for treason, and is perhaps a reason why Hollar chose to depict this particular narrative in his etching series. The idea and theme of Covenant was clearly prevalent in the 1640s and was part of the national dialogue around the time Hollar probably produced his *Abraham series*.

While Hollar's choice to depict the Abraham narrative is not unusual given that this text has always proved popular in art and literature, his choice of which parts of the narrative to depict is also telling of his religious and political allegiances. For example, his continued insistence on depicting figures of authority in seated positions on thrones, draped in finery, correlates with his other studies of royalty and members of nobility from etchings made throughout his life. One might argue this is a perfectly normal way to approach such a subject and to an extent it is; yet Hollar draws authoritative figures in what can only be

described as a style bordering on reverence and utmost respect. The difference between the way he handles the Pharaoh, Abimelech and even the Priest-King Melchizedek compared to other characters in the narrative leaves the viewer in no doubt as to who the authority figure is. His decision to end the series with Abraham seated in a kingly position reiterates this, as the Covenant has been fulfilled and only now can Abraham be rightly seen as the leader of God's people. Hollar's respect for authority and monarchical figures is evident throughout the series. The *Abraham* series is drawn in a way which artfully reflects Hollar's Royalist leanings, incorporating subtle hints and allusions to that end. As such, those people reading the series are – often inadvertently – subjected to these subtle biases. However it would have been unwise for Hollar to create the series with overtly political or Catholic overtones so while there is a subtle emphasis, it is not enough to be considered a piece of propaganda art. Biblical illustrations in the seventeenth century reflected the return to a moralistic reading of the Bible by showcasing certain stories "which told the uninitiated to learn from the events in the historical books of the Bible how God punished vice and rewarded virtue."[225] The use of figureheads such as Abraham, Jacob, Cain and Esau to illustrate such morals and to act as cautionary tales was commonplace, and Hollar was quick to follow the example of other artists by creating his own version of such stories. The result was a piece of work which amalgamated text, image, biblical Scripture, moralistic tales, artistic beauty and a political commentary.

This under-examined etching deserves more attention both as an early example of a comic strip, and as an image/text that reflects profound changes in the ways the Bible was accessed and understood by a newly literate population in the seventeenth century. The etching's subtle engagement with the political debates of the day also merits considerably more attention than it has hitherto received. Having begun to rectify these oversights, it may be hoped that further research will bring Hollar's biblical etchings to a much wider audience.

[225] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 166.
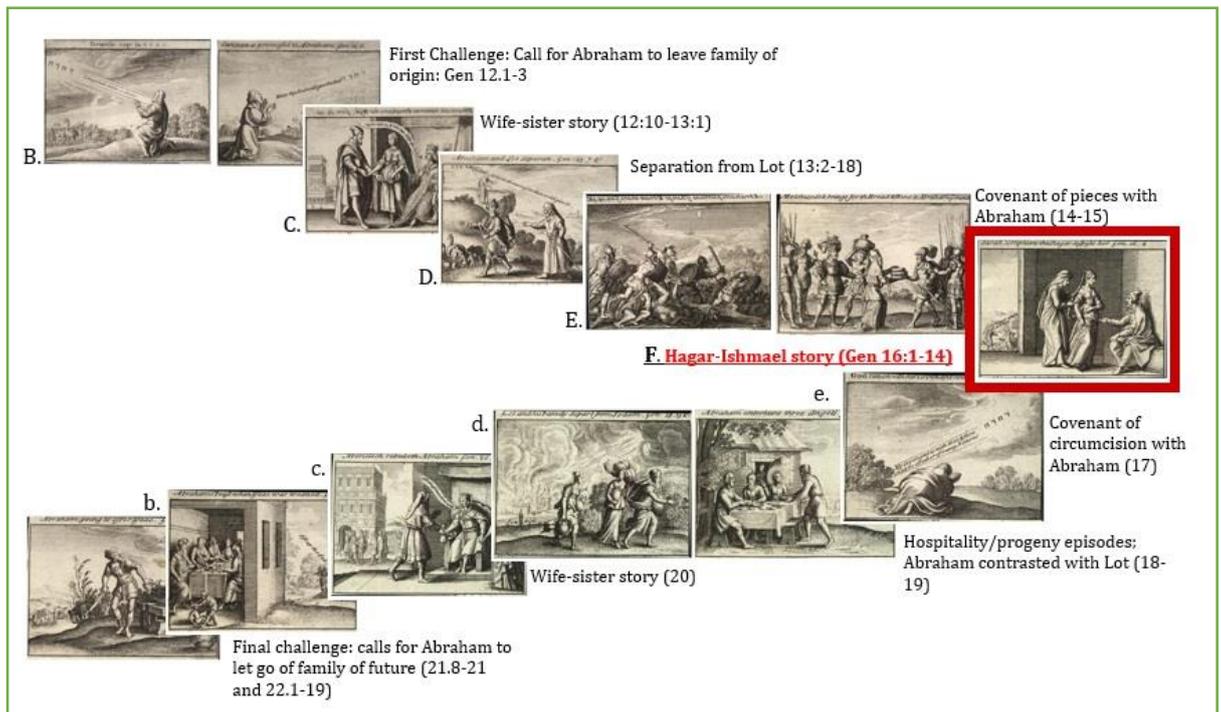
Fig 6.1: Visual representation of the Chiastic structure in the Abraham cycle, as depicted by Hollar's *Abraham* series.

Fig 6.2: *Prince of Wales,* Date unknown (State i).

Fig 6.3: *A Duke,* Date unknown (State i).

Fig 6.4: *Eq. Hospitaliarius,* Date
unknown (State ii).

Fig 6.5: *Templiarius,* Date unknown (State ii).

Fig 6.6: *Trinitarianus*, Date unknown (State ii).

Fig 6.7: *Print Sheet with Eight Scenes from Genesis* (numbered 11-22), Pieter Hendricksz. Schutz, c. 1650.

Fig 6.8: *Abraham Serving Three Angels,* Rembrandt, 1646.

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