

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ART: THE THEOLOGICAL BEARING OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION

### I. THE THEOLOGICAL BEARING (G. S. W., Jr.)

"When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, and whom I myself will send from the Father, he will bear witness on my behalf" (Jn 15. 26). "When he comes, however, being the Spirit of Truth he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak only what he hears, and will announce to you the things to come" (Jn. 16. 1). According to the fourth Gospel, the Holy Spirit will be a disclosive spirit revealing truths of God.

In his important work, *Fire and Light*, William M. Thompson persuasively argues that the saints and mystics are a rich source for theological reflection.<sup>1</sup> In a modest way, our own presentation argues that chisel, brush, and stylus are also key sources for, and hermeneutic vehicles of, religious insight and meaning. Art potentially both discloses and creates religious experience.

The artisan's art has had a profound, if not privileged, place in theological reflection and ecclesial life. For almost all Christians prior to the twentieth century, the mediums of art and liturgical behavior were the central vehicles for communicating the Christian story. Stained glass windows, carved wooden statuary, religious paintings, sculpture, decorated missals, and books of hours stimulated the imaginations and shaped the consciousness of the multitude of Christians who were illiterate, incapable of reading biblical stories, or of writing theological and catechetical reflections. These artistic forms and liturgical behavior both told and interpreted the Christian story. At times, they bonded together to articulate, explain, and apply the mysteries of the Christian religion to the great joys, deep turmoil, and the routine happenings of life. For twenty centuries, Christianity's ability to convey its interpretation of life depended on visual and aural artistic heritage and liturgical practice. In short, Christian art was crucial to education and perseverance in the faith. Christian art provided a lifeboat for survival in the tempest-tossed seas of daily existence.

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<sup>1</sup>*Fire and Light* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

Additionally, Christian art becomes a valuable source for comprehending the social organization and patterns of behavior in those periods of history that lack adequate written documentation. For instance, a fifteenth-century illumination from a book of hours shows the Holy Family: Joseph is seated near the family hearth planing a board, while Mary works at a loom. The young toddler Jesus roams around the room, aided by his "child walker," which Joseph presumably constructed. Who would imagine that practical wooden child walkers existed at this time in order that adult members of the family could pursue their own tasks and responsibilities? Likewise, Renaissance illuminations and paintings depict scenes of the fall of Adam and Eve in paradise, where the serpent is rendered with a face identical to Eve's. Other illuminations show the serpent's face identical to Adam's. One might argue that a "feminist" artist/theologian was at work at least nine centuries ago, anticipating the contemporary twentieth-century "women's" movement.

David Tracy has captured well what happens in the encounter of an individual or a community with art. He explained:

The actual experience of the work of art can be called a realized experience of an event of truth. More exactly, when I experience any classic work of art, I do not experience myself as an autonomous subject aesthetically appreciating the good quality of an aesthetic object set over against me. Indeed when I reflect after the experience on the experience itself, shorn of prior theories of aesthetics, I find that my subjectivity is never in control of the experience, nor is the work of art actually experienced as an object with certain qualities over against me. Rather the work of art encounters me with the surprise, impact, even shock of reality itself. In experiencing art I somehow recognize a truth I somehow know but know I do not really know except through the experience of recognition of the essential compelled by the work of art. I am transformed by its truth when I return to the everyday to the whole of what I ordinarily call reality, and discover new affinities, new sensibilities for the everyday.<sup>2</sup>

Art promotes an "imaginative conversation" that empowers an individual or community to discover ways in which both the great and the ordinary can bear meaningfulness rather than meaninglessness. In art the whirlwind of truth is set free. Art ignites the explosive power of the human imagination to pursue a direction or focus and therein to discover and even create meaning. The evocative and directional power of art intensifies when joined to liturgy or worship and when enacted in a space—namely, church architecture.<sup>3</sup>

Why does art have a privileged position, import, and value for ecclesial life and theological exploration? From whence does art derive its potency? Clearly, individual genius and insight are essential—blessings by the Muse, divine gifts, or simply the transparency and openness of artists to life. Furthermore, the

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<sup>2</sup>*The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 112-13.

<sup>3</sup>George S. Worgul, Jr., *From Magic to Metaphor* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

artistic medium itself may possess the potential to articulate more adequately the great mysterious truths of Christian faith. The "artist" can say so much more with a simultaneity, comprehensiveness, and nuance that theological discourse rarely, if ever, achieves. The theologian might in imaginative thinking perceive two or three or four dimensions and aspects of a Christian doctrine or experience at once. However, as Ian Ramsey noted three decades ago, ordinary language or discourse falls short of expressing the multiphase and multidimensional depth of mystery.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the painter, sculptor, or iconographer can overcome this very deficit by expressing plurality in unity and unity in plurality. Theological language primarily distinguishes and differentiates, whereas artistic creations correlate, integrate, and interrelate. Art thrives on multiple hermeneutical and heuristic dimensions. The encounter with mystery or with inexhaustible intelligibility stimulates the rich insights of artists and their beauty-full creations.

In line with the general theme of the 1996 convention of the CTSA, an examination of the Holy Spirit in art will be pursued. This endeavor also anticipates the millennial preparation for 1998, the Year of the Spirit. As John Paul II notes, "The church cannot prepare for the millennium any other way than in the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup> A revisiting of the Holy Spirit in art may offer a fresh way to experience and understand the unique role and person of the Third Person in the life and action of the Trinity.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, artistic renditions of the Holy Spirit issue from biblical and postbiblical conciliar and theological teachings. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is represented zoomorphically, polymorphically, and anthropomorphically. Interestingly, the anthropomorphic or human representations of the Spirit (and the Father) are situated in heavenly or metahistorical contexts. A temporal incarnation of the Spirit (or the Father), which might parallel the Incarnation of the Son, does not occur in the New Testament and its artistic traditions. Rather, anthropomorphic renditions of the Spirit occur in artistic representations of the Old Testament or during divine deliberations and activities in the heavenly court—in effect, at the throne of God. Orthodoxy in theological language and Christian art affirms that only the Son or Logos became enfleshed among us. Indeed, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists the following symbols of the Holy Spirit: water, anointing, fire, cloud and light, the seal, the hand, the finger, and the dove, none suggesting the enfleshment of the full human form, figure, and nature.

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<sup>4</sup>*Religious Language* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>Pope John Paul II, "On the Coming of the Third Millennium" (Washington DC: USCC, 1994) 57.

<sup>6</sup>It is interesting that even the more important theological texts on the Holy Spirit pay little or no attention to art. See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Seabury, 1983), or Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

In his ground breaking book called *The Trinity*, Karl Rahner underscores the relationship between the economic and the immanent trinity.<sup>7</sup> He affirms that a real relationship exists between the inner life of God as unity in plurality and the saving actions of this God in human history. In a sense, Christian artists have grasped this truth from the beginning. Their analogical imagination attempted to comprehend and express the ineffable God by understanding the inner life and external actions of this God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in terms of the unity and plurality of the human being rendering judgments and undertaking actions. In this process, the different Persons of the godhead assume various roles in the “debate” arriving at the divine decision and in the responsibilities for implementing it.

Sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, and stained glass grasp and express the biblical and theological beliefs on both the unity and plurality of the sacred Trinity. Visual images express the ineffable with more balance and verisimilitude than strictly verbal treatise and catechetical formulas. In a real sense, artistic renditions of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the context of Trinitarian life and mission are tantamount to exercises in systematic theology. The artists present the great mysteries of faith in ways that depict them as interrelated, interdependent, and mutually disclosive. In this enterprise, artists tend to characterize the Holy Spirit as the action of the Godhead, a veritable efficient cause. This Holy Spirit also vivifies or gives life as the primordial act of love. What follows will substantiate the foregoing assertions.

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<sup>7</sup>*The Trinity* (New York: Herder, 1970).

II. VISUAL REPRESENTATION  
(A. C. L.)

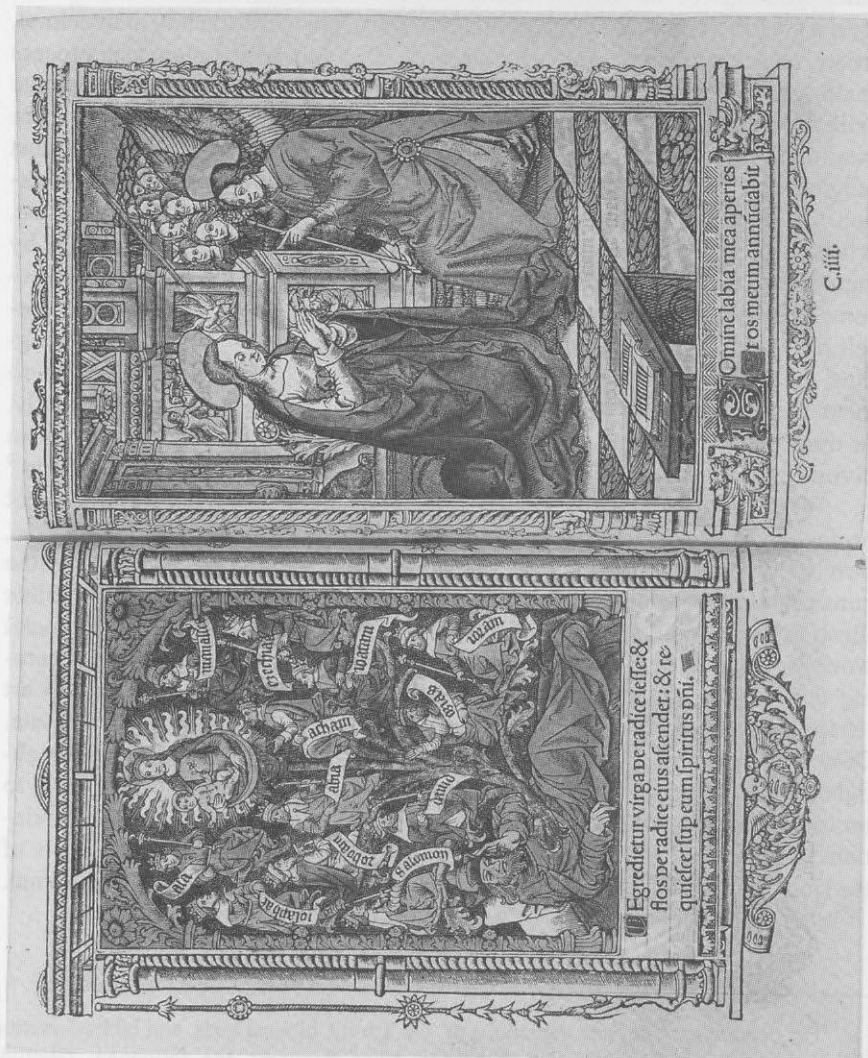


Figure 1. *Book of Hours* (Paris, 1511) C3<sup>v</sup>-C4<sup>r</sup>. HEH 108798.  
 \*Huntington Library, San Marino, California, by permission.

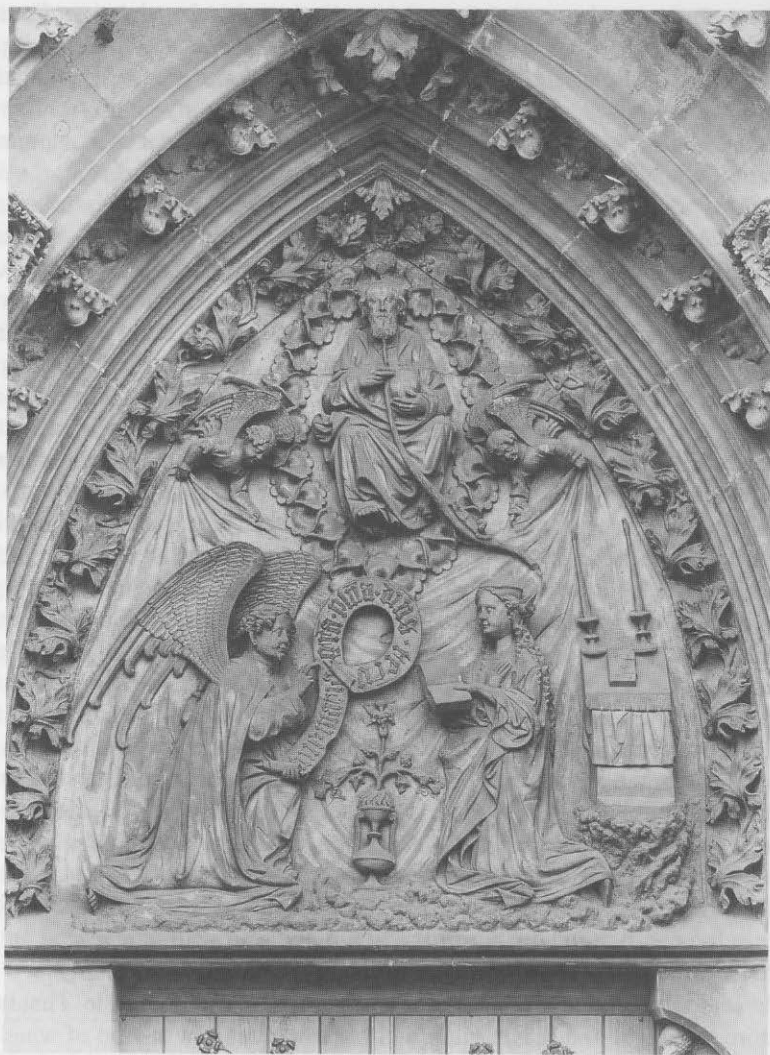
Visual representation of the Holy Spirit usually takes three forms—zoomorphic, polymorphic, and anthropomorphic. The first refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of an animal, such as a dove; the second to other forms of representation, usually inanimate, such as a cloud or mist, a flame or fire, a

gust of wind or breath of air; and the third to artistic depictions of the Holy Spirit resembling humankind. All three forms of representation, however, use the Holy Spirit to highlight divine deliberation—that is, aspects and attributes of the inner workings of the deity's mind. Though the ineffable and inexpressible mystery of the triune godhead cannot be fully comprehended by humankind, artists, nevertheless, imaginatively conceive of divine deliberation as a process analogous to human deliberation. The artistic intent is not to reduce divine deliberation to human psychology, but to render the mystery of the Trinity more meaningful by analogy or by figurative expression. At the same time, like most religious art, the depiction of divine deliberation has the moral purpose of edification. By investing the mind of the godhead with psychological verisimilitude, artists thereby present models of virtuous thought and action to be emulated by humankind. Based on the analogy of the human psyche, divine deliberation becomes a psychodrama or monodrama, a veritable dialogue with and within oneself. Diverse claims compete for one's approval, potential outcomes are imagined, resolution is achieved by the virtuous exercise of the will, and the enactment of one's decision results in consequences, psychologically and emotionally. In the foregoing process, art highlights the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in divine deliberation and the central importance of the Third Person in the Trinity.<sup>8</sup>

While the present study focuses on the issues recounted above, it does not profess to be comprehensive in its coverage of art—of various historical eras, through diverse cultures, across numerous aesthetic movements, or into the numerous “material means” of expression, such as manuscript illumination, Bible illustration, painting on canvas, sculpture, murals, frescoes, mosaics, and metal work. Nor does the present study enter directly into theological debate concerning the Holy Spirit or the other Divine Persons, though the references to art herein and the interpretations provided have an important bearing on such debate. Despite its selective focus, the present study serves numerous purposes: to highlight how and why artistic representation bears on theological investigation, to prompt more comprehensive and systematic studies of religious art and its relationship to theology, and to perceive art as a medium that highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the triune godhead, largely to liken the godhead to humankind.

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<sup>8</sup>For commentary on, and depictions of, the Trinity, biblical texts, and biblical events discussed in the present essay, see, among other resources, the following: Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 2 vols., trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich CT: New York Graphic Society, 1971–1972); and Adolphe Napoleon Didron, *Christian Iconography*, 2 vols., trans. E. J. Millington (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965); Louis Reau, *Iconographie de l'Art Chretien*, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955–1959). With permission, some of the material concerning divine deliberation in the present essay is reprinted from Albert C. Labriola, “‘God Speaks’: Milton's Dialogue in Heaven and the Tradition of Divine Deliberation,” *Cithara* 25 (1986): 5–30.



Portal, Virgin's Chapel, Wurzburg, Germany.

\*Photo of Albert C. Labriola. Reproduced by permission.

Zoomorphic representations of the Holy Spirit almost always depict the Divine Person as a dove. While one acknowledges that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in the dove (as the Son becomes incarnate in the form and nature of humankind), divine presence is still manifested. In such instances—and without concomitant representation of the other Divine Persons—the Holy Spirit is figured as the dove released by Noah from the ark, to which it returns with an olive sprig in its beak. In numerous medieval illuminations of the biblical deluge,

the dove alights at the top of the ark, from which Noah, emerging from the enclosure, moves to grasp it. Or the dove alights into the outstretched and cupped hands of Noah, who has already emerged to welcome its return. The whiteness of the dove, its gentleness, and the olive sprig respectively signify purity and innocence, a temperate or mild godhead, and the restored peace and harmony between the godhead and humankind, heaven and earth. Viewed from the foregoing perspectives, the dove, which figures the Holy Spirit, signifies concurrently all three Divine Persons: purity and innocence are the virtues of the Son in his sacrificial ministry, virtues that through his merits he transposes to humankind; mildness distinguishes the Father after his anger is mollified and as justice is satisfied by the Son's sacrifice on behalf of humankind; and the harmonious relationship between the godhead and humankind issues forth after the tempest-tossed deluge subsides and when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell with and within humankind. Such artistic rendition focuses on the respective, though interacting, virtues of the Divine Persons, projecting the distinct and, at the same time, interdependent roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In the illuminations referred to above, the dove is at times contrasted with the other bird released by Noah, the glossy black raven, a "ravenous" predator with a long and pointed bill. The raven is visible in the background or in a marginal miniature, usually atop a hill and pecking at carrion. Such depictions suggest that as the waters rose during the deluge, the people presumably fled to safer ground on high. When the waters receded and as the peaks again became visible, the promontories were littered with the carcasses of the victims of the flood. Its prey thus exposed, the raven does not return to the ark. As such, the raven signifies the mouth and jaws of hell biting the damned, as well as the insatiable appetite of hell to consume numberless victims. And the deluge with its steep cataracts typologically relates to the tumultuous lake of sulphurous fire in the Apocalypse, presumably where the damned will undergo eternal punishment. The deluge and the raven thus signify the hellish torment of the reprobate, whereas the pacific relationship of the triune godhead with humankind and the gentle dove betoken heavenly approbation.

In some illuminations, Noah's ark resembles a church or temple. That is, the structure is upright and rectangular, with a peaked roof, at the top of which the dove alights. With its head upright and an olive sprig outstretched horizontally at the mouth, the dove projects a cruciform appearance, akin to a cross or crucifix surmounting a church. In this attitude or posture, the dove represents a Christic figure. Or the ark may have an opening at its peak, an aperture through which the dove returns or from which Noah reaches upright. But when such illuminations also depict the interior of the ark with hierarchies of creatures at various levels, the overall structure simulates a microcosm of the Creation, at the top of which the Holy Spirit, dovelike but resembling Christ crucified, oversees the second Creation in the manner of the Father enthroned on high—that is, the second Creation that issues from the ark and from which propagation will begin



anew after the deluge. Atop the ark and in its resemblances to the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit signifies the triune godhead in the attitude of divine deliberation: bringing into existence the Creation, along with humankind; making redemption possible after humankind has fallen; and judging humankind, finally, as saved or damned. This chronology proceeds from the past, to the present, and toward the future—the tripartite division typical of human perception. When such a work of art is interpreted by reference to any one of these three temporal states, human perception is at work. Interpreting all three temporal states simultaneously in the one work of art enables humankind to approximate, albeit imperfectly, the transcendent view of the godhead, whose outlook is *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>9</sup>

Divine deliberation thus becomes a process simultaneously encompassing the plan of the triune godhead to create human beings, the deific prescience that acknowledges their eventual fallen state, the preconceived intent to offer them redemption, and the potential of a merciful judgment at the Second Coming. From this perspective, the triune godhead simultaneously creates and redeems—or, to put it another way, creates and recreates at the same time. When the simultaneity of divine deliberation is reformulated to become understandable to humankind, the results appear illogical, incredible, even absurd. From various perspectives, the deity, in effect, repurchases its own creation, pays twice for the same thing, or continues to express self-sacrificing love, which has been, is being, and will finally be rejected in many instances—the final rejection already foreknown to the Divine Persons though not yet enacted by humankind. In line with this thinking, the Holy Spirit figured as a dove—in its purity, innocence, and gentleness and by its role as a sacrificial offering in the Scriptures—dramatizes that the deity, having rightfully levied on humankind the demands of justice, voluntarily and lovingly intercedes to fulfill them. The constellation of virtues at work in the Divine Persons—love, clemency, pity, and compassion—provides humankind with a model of deliberation and manner of action to be imitated. By doing so, humankind affirms its creation in the “image and likeness of God.”

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<sup>9</sup>Most of the artistic representations cited are from illuminated manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library, 29 East 36th St., New York 10016. Manuscripts are listed by their shelf numbers, and the folio numbers for the illuminations (as rectos, unless versos are stated) follow. Some other information, if relevant, may be provided: author, text, language of the manuscript, center of production, the date, scribe, illuminator, patron, the names of masters, their workshops, and their followers. At times, such information is controversial and speculative, and further research may lead to more certain attributions, dates, and localizations. For representations of Noah's ark, see Pierpont Morgan Manuscript (hereafter abbreviated PMM) 739, 11E12 10 (13th-century book of hours); PMM 644, 8G2 79 (10th-century Beatus of Liebana, from Spain); PMM 338, 4F5 122 (Psalter, ca. 1200, by the Ingeborg Psalter Workshop in Belgium, probably Tournai); PMM 43, 1D5 9 (“Huntingfield Psalter” in Latin, ca. 1215).

When depicted as a dove in scenes of the Creation wherein the other Divine Persons are anthropomorphically rendered, the Holy Spirit may hover over a body of water, while the Father and Son are enthroned above. Called a vertical anthropo-zoomorphic Trinity, this deployment of the Divine Persons does not necessarily characterize the Spirit as subordinate to the Father and the Son but as the agent or executor of the Creation on behalf of the Trinity. In variations of these renditions of the Creation, the Holy Spirit may remain at the throne of the triune godhead—between the Father and the Son, who face each other. Uniting them is the dove in a cruciform attitude: head upright and facing the viewer, wings extended horizontally toward the Father and the Son, and tail downward. The tip of the one wing is at the mouth of the Father, and the tip of the other reaches into the mouth of the Son. Interpreted as the kiss of the Father and the Son, the breath of their love, their mutual indwelling, and the issuance and offspring of their interaction, the Holy Spirit, however, should not be construed as having been generated by the Father and the Son. Such a fallacy concerning the Spirit emerges when the interrelationship of the Divine Persons is expounded in language, expressed in metaphors, and rendered in art, all in order to accommodate the godhead to human experience and comprehension.<sup>10</sup>

While representing the Divine Persons, the process of accommodation may misrepresent their ontological relationship. Thus, the language “Father” and “Son” implies both temporal sequence and causality because of analogies to paternity and filiation. The metaphor of the Holy Spirit as the emanation or procession from the other Divine Persons implies another temporal and causal sequence, allowing one to infer therefrom a hierarchical relationship, also conveyed by the ordinal designations of the Divine Persons as First, Second, and Third. And anthropomorphic representations of the Father and the Son and zoomorphic visualization of the Holy Spirit seem to be other means of subordination, contrasting superior humankind with inferior bestiality and, according to some commentators, the first two Divine Persons with the third.

The language, metaphor, and art of accommodation are expressions, to echo a well-known phrase, of humankind, by humankind, and for humankind. Accordingly, the endeavor strives to “humanize” the godhead not “divinize” it, to invest the Divine Persons with human attributes, to ascribe human psychology to the Trinity, and to liken the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to the interacting virtues in the human person, to the dynamic of the human psyche in deliberation, and to the emotional coloration of the human personality. In fact, the zoomorphic representations of the Holy Spirit at the Creation are complemented by anthropomorphic renditions in medieval iconography, wherein the Divine Persons, pictured identically and enthroned alongside one another, are deliberating on the creation of humankind or actually “creating and animating Adam.” One, two, or

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<sup>10</sup>PMM 791, 12F3 4v and 12F4 4v.d1 (“Lothian Bible” in Latin, Abbey of St. Albans, c. 1215–1220).

three of the Divine Persons may animate Adam by visual contact—in effect, the exchange of eye beams and loving glances—by exhaling onto him, by embracing him with mist or dew, or by uplifting him from the earth, an especially varied means of representation wherein the Lord is a gardener and Adam a plant or tree. And when one Divine Person is interacting with Adam, the suggestion is that the other two Persons are participating. In other words, the Divine Persons interrelate with Adam as they, when enthroned, interact among themselves—by visual fixation, exhalation and transpiration, and physical contact, usually hand to hand.

One of the most compelling anthropomorphic renditions of the triune godhead deliberating on the creation of Adam occurs in *l'Hortus Deliciarum*, a twelfth-century Latin manuscript that pictures the Divine Persons as identical in all details (physical appearance, attire, and accoutrements), enthroned, and holding a scroll that contains the text of Genesis 1. 26: "*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*" From such artistic perspectives, Adam—and, by implication, humankind—becomes the *alter ego* or self-image of the godhead. When, therefore, fallen humankind emulates the virtues of divine deliberation, the formative outcome is one's restored likeness to the Divine Persons, the likeness imprinted at one's creation but disfigured by one's pursuit of vices not virtues. If the Divine Persons are often depicted alike in order to dramatize the deity beholding itself, the deity when viewing its image as originally imparted to, or restored in, humankind may experience self-recognition, not to mention self-identification, precisely what Paul may have meant when he prophesied that "God shall be all in all." Thus, the saved soul, like Adam at the Creation, will be as intimate with the deity as the Divine Persons are with one another. Since such intimacy is breath-to-breath and hand-to-hand, the deity will view itself in the "looking glasses" or the eyes of its beloved humankind.<sup>11</sup>

The foregoing account has suggested that the art of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, while dramatizing the virtues of divine deliberation, encompasses the simultaneity and conjunction of the deity's transcendent view, in contrast to the chronology typical of human perception. In fact, art often collapses the chronology between prophecies in the Hebraic scriptures and their fulfillment in the Christian dispensation. A prominent example, in which the Holy Spirit is figured as a dove, includes the Tree of Jesse, a prophecy concerning the coming of Jesus. Isaiah 11:1-5 prophesies that a rod or shoot (*virga* in Latin) will emerge from the stump of Jesse; and a bud shall blossom, overshadowed by the Spirit of the Lord that brings the seven virtues or gifts associated with the third Person. Enumerated as a biblical catalogue in Isaiah 11, these seven virtues are often rendered in art as doves descending, arrayed in a semicircular configuration against the head of Jesus, who surmounts the Tree of Jesse. Suggested thereby is a nimbus, composed of doves with wings outstretched and heads downward.

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<sup>11</sup>Didron, *Christian Iconography* II: 40-42 and fig. 137.

Because of the seven cruciform images created by the doves, the nimbus anticipates the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit that Jesus exercises in his suffering on the tree of the cross and that inform his seven utterances immediately before his death, including discourse with the Father on high and with humankind beneath him. When artists render *virga* not only as a rod or shoot but also as the Virgin, then Mary and the Christ child surmount the Tree of Jesse, together enthroned against a flower whose petals, the corolla, are like the rays of the sun and whose blossoms alongside succulent fruit suggest the Eucharistic repast. Overhead is the Holy Spirit as a dove.<sup>12</sup>

Typologically, the Tree of Jesse is conjoined with the Annunciation, at times on facing pages of manuscripts (fig. 1) or in a diptych of a single leaf. In such typologically interrelated art, the Holy Spirit usually figured as a dove descends with rays or beams of light from on high. In some depictions, the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation is the dove flying along a diagonal axis from the upper left toward the lower right. The dove is often midway in the depiction, descending from the Father whose face is visible in the upper left and heading toward the Virgin in the lower right. Rays of light issue from the Father and accompany the dove, who variously descends toward the head, breast, or womb of the Virgin. At times, the Christ child accompanies the dove, an iconographic deployment that draws attention to their relationship. In tandem, the dove leads the way, followed by the burning babe who descends headlong and who carries a flaming cross against his shoulder, suggesting his eventual immolation and his role as a burnt offering. Whether titled the Annunciation or the Trinity, such depictions highlight the interaction among the Divine Persons, as well as the triune godhead's impregnation of the Virgin. When the babe descends already fully formed, the role of Mary in parthenogenesis is somewhat diminished; for Jesus as the homunculus issues from the triune godhead and only abides in the womb of the Virgin until his birth.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise common to depictions of the Tree of Jesse and the Annunciation is the flowering shoot, usually a lily—atop the rod held by the angel Gabriel or in a vase close to the Virgin. When the triformed lily or fleur-de-lis issues from Gabriel's rod, its three petals—the central one upright, the other two horizontally

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<sup>12</sup>PMM 710, 10E4 112 (Missal in Weingarten Abbey, Germany, ca. 1200–1232). The Tree of Jesse is often rendered in stained glass, one of the most renowned examples being Chartres Cathedral, which depicts Christ enthroned at the summit of the tree and surrounded by seven doves (signifying the gifts and virtues of the Holy Spirit). The Virgin enthroned with the Christ child on her lap is usually the central image of rose windows in Gothic cathedrals, and immediately surrounding them are doves, sometimes as many as twelve to prefigure Pentecost wherein the Apostles were visited by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>13</sup>PMM 440, 6B7 7v (Psalter and Book of Hours, ca. 1240); Book of Hours (Paris, 1511), C3v-C4r, The Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California (HEH 108798).

extended to the left and right—create a cruciform image not unlike that of the dove, with its head upright and its wings outstretched. Indeed, in the apocryphal scriptures, God indicates his selection of a spouse for Mary by a wondrous happening—of the many staves cast onto the ground, each by a suitor of Mary, only the staff of Joseph flowers. A variation of this account indicates that the dove hovered atop Joseph's staff, thereby reinforcing the identification between the dove and the lily, between the dove and the virtues of the Holy Spirit imparted to Joseph, and between the dove and the angelic emissary and agent of the godhead.<sup>14</sup>

When the legends of the cross are also integrated into such artistic renditions, then the staff of Joseph from which a flower issued and on which the Holy Spirit alighted supplies the very wood of the cross, often depicted as flowering and fruit-laden and usually surmounted by the Holy Spirit visualized as a dove in the nimbus or in the halo of Christ. Or toward the base of the cross, the dove, wings extended horizontally, may be pinioned by the same nail at Jesus's feet; and when the dove is engulfed by flames in the manner of a phoenix, resurrection after death is the dominant theme. If depicted as an olive tree, the cross typologically fulfills the significance of the olive sprig held by the dove. When not directly visualized, the presence of the Holy Spirit is implied by the attitude of Christ crucified, whose head is upward and whose arms are outstretched like the wings of the dove. When the crucified Lord is celebrated as Christ the King, the cross becomes the throne of God and seat of judgment, symbolizing, as well, the presence of the Father.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most memorable artistic representations of the Annunciation is a stone sculpture in the portal of the Virgin's Chapel in Wurzburg, built between 1377 and 1479 in the late Gothic style (fig. 2). The Father, while enthroned on high, holds a tube into which he breathes. The end of the tube inclines toward the ear of the Virgin, whom Gabriel greets. From the tube and into the Virgin's ear issues the breath of the Father. At its middle—that is, between the one end held by the Father and the other end at the Virgin's ear—the pneumatic tube resembles a sack, a placenta on top of which the homunculus descends headlong. Between the Virgin and Gabriel is a multiheaded lily; and atop it rests the Holy Spirit figured as a dove, head upright and wings extended. The vase containing the lily resembles an hourglass, signifying the imminent fulfillment of prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. Gabriel's greeting of Mary is inscribed on a scroll, which the angel uplifts in his left hand while he extends his right hand in benediction toward Mary. The scroll held by Gabriel is configured like the Greek

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<sup>14</sup>See the Annunciation in *The Bible of the Poor [Biblia Pauperum]: A Facsimile and Edition of the British Library Blockbook C.9. d.2*, trans. and comm. by Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990) 15. *The Bible of the Poor* is a xylographic blockbook dating back to the end of the 15th century.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

“rho,” the first letter of “Christ” in Greek, signifying Christos, the anointed one (in Hebrew, the Messiah). Lit tapers stand on an altar behind the Virgin, suggesting the wondrous mystery of her impregnation but unviolated chastity. The tapers are burning, but unconsumed, similar to the burning bush in the theophany at Horeb, a wonder that typologically prefigures the mystery of the Virgin birth of Jesus. The images in this sculpture reinforce the presence of the Holy Spirit in at least three ways, combining polymorphic and zoomorphic representation—the breathing from the Father that wafts the babe below, the dove that has alighted on the lily, and the flames of the tapers, not unlike tongues of fire.

Comparable to such depictions of the triune godhead at the Annunciation are portrayals of all three Divine Persons at the Nativity. In an early fifteenth-century book of hours, *Tres riches heures* (the manuscript is in the Musée Condé, Chantilly, France), prepared under the patronage of Jean, Duc de Berri, a vertical anthropo-zoomorphic rendition of the Trinity is integrated into the scene of the Nativity. On high is the Father, from whose face and mouth rays of light descend, in the midst of which the dove heads toward the Christ child. The babe lies in a manger, flanked by Mary to his left and Joseph to his right.

Artistic renditions of other New Testament events in which the Holy Spirit plays a major role include the Baptism of the Lord, the Transfiguration, and Pentecost. At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus, when baptized, is proclaimed and identified as the Son by the voice of the Father (who in art, as in *Tres riches heures*, is often enthroned on high), while the Holy Spirit imaged as a dove descends toward the Son or overshadows him. At his Baptism, in other words, the Son and the other Divine Persons become integrated in a theophany. Thereafter, as scripture recounts, the Holy Spirit impels Jesus into the wilderness for forty days, during which he withstands adversity and resists temptation by exercising the virtues and gifts imparted to him at his Baptism. While most art portrays the experience of Jesus in the wilderness as a preview of, and preparation for, his later suffering, the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit are also highlighted in various ways. First, the forty days in the wilderness may be interrelated typologically with Noah's experiences for the same period of time, all the while accompanied by the dove that he eventually released and that returned to him. Second, the travails of Jesus in the wilderness may be likened to the sojourn of the chosen people, who were accompanied by the Holy Spirit, manifested alternately as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. Such manifestations of the Holy Spirit, recounted in Scripture and rendered in art, underscore the Third Person's empathic accompaniment of “the chosen people”—whether Noah, the Israelites, or the Messiah.

Like the Baptism of the Lord, the Transfiguration is another episode in which all three Divine Persons are present to humankind's perception—the Father voices his affirmation of the divinity of Jesus, who is also overshadowed by a cloud that signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit. Consistent with art that dramatizes divine deliberation, renditions of the Transfiguration situate Jesus on

Mt. Tabor encompassed by light—an aureole with sunlike emissions or a mandorla. Flanking Jesus are Moses and Elijah, while Peter, James, and John—the same three disciples who will witness his anguish in Gethsemane—fall prostrate at his feet. Illuminated manuscripts, illustrated bibles, paintings, mosaics, and frescoes portray Jesus simultaneously in the states of humiliation and exaltation, suffering and triumph—or, in effect, as *Christus Patiens* and *Christus Victor*. His numinous appearance and attitude anticipate his imminent Resurrection and Ascension, not to mention his eventual return in “power and glory” at the Second Coming. But visible, though inconspicuous, signs, such as the stigmata, remind the onlooker that humiliation and suffering will precede the triumph of Jesus. Raphael’s painting of the Transfiguration in the Vatican shows Jesus with the wounds of his suffering but in a state of levitation and against the vault of the heavens. By such a depiction, Raphael anticipates, on the one hand, the crucifixion and, on the other, later glorious events: the triumph of Jesus at the Resurrection, his travel heavenward at the Ascension, and his return in “power and glory” at the Second Coming, when he will be in session at the final judgment. Similarly, Fra Angelico’s fresco in the convent of San Marco in Venice shows Jesus in a full white garment, arms extended horizontally and his entire figure radiating light. But this attitude simultaneously suggests both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, as well as the extended wings of the Holy Spirit.

While the Holy Spirit at the Transfiguration is figured as a luminous cloud over the head of Jesus, the third Person artistically appears as the rays of the rising sun and the illumined clouds at the Resurrection, as the effulgent heavens into which Jesus enters at the Ascension, and as the resplendent firmament against which Christ will be framed at the Second Coming. The foregoing artistic motifs converge in representations of certain postresurrectional appearances of Jesus and in the art of Pentecost. In John’s Gospel, Jesus breathes on the disciples, thereby impelling them into travail then triumph, in the manner that he was guided and accompanied in his temporal ministry by the Holy Spirit. Likened to the animation of Adam at the Creation, this intervention of Jesus causes the disciples, in effect, to be “born again” of the Holy Spirit. Soon afterwards, they witness a theophany at Pentecost. In most artistic renditions of the Pentecost, the Virgin Mary is in the midst of the disciples, so that the rays of light, called tongues of fire, and the dove descending recall the Annunciation.

If at the Annunciation the Virgin Mary was imprinted with the “word of God” in her mind, heart, and soul, not to mention impregnated with it, at Pentecost the disciples undergo a comparable experience. The heavens having opened above them—from which placid waters appear, fire and wind issue forth, and the dove descends—the disciples also receive a veritable baptism and accept divine indwelling, becoming pregnant with the Holy Spirit or suffused with his gifts and virtues. Indeed, artistic correlations between the Annunciation and Pentecost are so graphic that many of the same accoutrements appear. The Virgin at the Annunciation often reads a book when visited by Gabriel, or an open book is

evident at a lectern nearby. Presumably, Mary is, or has been, reading a scriptural passage—whether Isaiah 7 or 11 or another text that forecasts the birth of the Messiah in which she is providentially involved, or a text that recounts a wonder, such as the burning bush of Exodus 3, that interpreters liken to the virgin birth.

At Pentecost, moreover, Mary and the disciples often hold open books. In *The Bible of the Poor*, the scene at Pentecost is juxtaposed with a depiction of Moses and the tablets on which the “word of God” was inscribed.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the disciples, in the company of the Virgin Mary, become the living temples surmounted by the dove, bearing and wearing the “word of God” inscribed on the tables (or tablets) of their hearts, largely because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The “tongues of fire” signify the ardor and zeal of the disciples who, when fortified with the gifts and virtues of the Holy Spirit, impart or breathe the “word of God” as part of their worldwide evangelical ministry. Various tableaux of Pentecost, in effect, recall artistic representations of the temple-like ark on which the dove alights or into which it enters, as well as of Noah who represents a living temple bearing the “word of God.”<sup>17</sup> In some renditions of Pentecost, Jesus oversees the event from the vault of the heavens, while the Holy Spirit, below him, is signified by rays, occasionally red to signify the issuance of blood, descending onto the Apostles. Or Jesus is ascending heavenward, visible only from the waist downward; as he ascends out of sight, the dove appears at his feet, descending into the midst of the Apostles. Or the Trinity enthroned in heaven—the Father and the Son anthropomorphically depicted, and the Holy Spirit portrayed as a dove—oversee the Apostles and the Virgin Mary below.<sup>18</sup>

If the art thus far surveyed has stressed the gifts and virtues of the Third Person, the role of the Holy Spirit in the triune godhead, and the deity’s relationship with humankind, the psychological verisimilitude that distinguishes divine deliberation more compellingly appears in (what may be called) the art of the Redemption. In such art, the triune godhead and the Holy Spirit, in particular, play a much larger role than one might expect. Traditionally, divine deliberation

<sup>16</sup>For a discussion of the branch-cross, tree-cross, and flowering cross, see Schiller, *ibid.*, II, 133-36; and Reau, *ibid.*, II, pt. 2, 483-85.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>18</sup>PMM 275, 4A7 9 (13th-century Psalter, Augsburg); PMM 710, 10D9 64v (Missal, Weingarten Abbey, Germany, ca. 1200-1232); PMM 743, 11G3 88 (Book of Hours, Lucon Master Workshop, ca. 1415); PMM 641, 8E4 80v (Sacramentary, Mont-St.-Michel, ca. 1060); PMM 905.II, 14C9 194 (Gradual, Nuremberg, dated 1510, signed by the scribe Friedrich Rosendorf and the illuminator Jacob Elsner); PMM 495, 7B11 59 (Missal, Tours, end of 15th century); PMM 69, 2B1 106v (Book of Hours, Rome, dated 1546, signed by the illuminator Giulio Clovio); PMM 781, 12E8 215v (Gospels, Monastery of St. Peter, Salzburg, first half of the eleventh century); PMM 92, 2F8 11v (Book of Hours, Paris, ca. 1230); PMM 780, 12D9 51 (Gospel Lectionary, Monastery of St. Peter, Salzburg, second half of the 11th century); PMM 493, 7A11 18v (Book of Hours, Bruges, workshop of the Master of Anthony of Burgundy, ca. last third of the 15th century).



unfolds as a dialogue at the throne of God. This dialogue or discourse, while rendered in the art of the Middle Ages, also emerges in vernacular drama and in sermon-dialogue, for which the homilist assumes more than one role or voice and functions as both the commentator and the expositor for what he enacts at the pulpit. Especially in art, the gifts or virtues of the Holy Spirit become allegorical personifications. Called at times the daughters of God, these virtues when interacting at the throne of God signify divine deliberation in the setting of a heavenly court, involving a parliamentary or judicial proceeding. Whether two or more (at times as many as seven) virtues interact, they almost always are the gifts of the Holy Spirit or close variations thereof, including Truth, Peace, Charity, Hope, and Prudence. Thus, "Prudence" is another designation for, or close variation of, "Counsel."<sup>19</sup>

The *locus classicus* from which these variations of divine deliberation emerge is Psalm 85. 10: "Misericordia et Veritas obviaverunt sibi; Justitia et Pax osculatae sunt" ("Mercy and Truth are met together; Justice and Peace have kissed each other"). Two scholars, G. R. Owst and Hope Traver, have traced the homiletic and dramatic treatments of the divine deliberation in which the virtues participate. Drawing upon the work of Traver and alluding to Psalm 85, Owst synthesizes the tradition of "elaborate disputation between the four Sister-Virtues in the presence of God, concerning the Fall of Adam and the plan of future redemption for mankind through Christ" (p. 90). In her *Four Daughters of God*, Traver states that the disputation of the daughters of God "is appeased when the Son of God offers to take man's place and suffer in his stead" (p. 5). Many of the disputations involve the Divine Persons as interlocutors, as examiners of the Virtues, or as commentators. In one medieval play, dating back to 1474 and performed in French at Rouen, the chief disputants become Mercy and Justice, who, in advocating their respective positions, cite different scriptural passages. The debate continues, overseen and moderated by the Father, until the announcement of the Son's intervention causes the Virtues, after the manner of Psalm 85, to kiss in peace. Precisely here—at the kiss of peace—is a clearcut reference to the Holy Spirit, whose virtues eventually inform the debate and achieve thereby a harmonious reconciliation.<sup>20</sup>

Iconographically, books of hours of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries show the virtues at the throne of God. Or the virtues, as many as seven of them,

<sup>19</sup>Resp. PMM 883, 14A12 62v (Gospel and Epistle Lectionary, Belgium, middle of the 12th century); PMM 808, 13A4 24 (Gospels, Austria, middle of the 13th century); PMM 359, 5C9 115v (Book of Hours, Paris, ca. 1430–1435).

<sup>20</sup>See Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God: Bryn Mawr College Monographs* (Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania: Monograph Series VI, 1907); G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966); Samuel C. Chew, *The Virtues Reconciled: An Iconographic Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947); Labriola, "God Speaks," *ibid.*, 13–16.

appear in the roundels at the margins.<sup>21</sup> The Father and the Son, seated alongside one another, hold an open bible, an attitude suggesting that divine deliberation (or the discourse of the virtues) derives from scriptural passages. At opposite sides of the open Bible, the Father and the Son signify the contending positions of Justice and Mercy. In other depictions the Father and the Son, together enthroned, hold an open Bible, but between them the Holy Spirit is figured as a dove with outstretched wings, the tips of which extend to the mouths of the other Divine Persons. The Son may have his left hand on the open Bible, while in his right hand he holds a cross, the top of which rests against his shoulder. If depicted as a babe while enthroned on the lap of the Father, the Son may still have a cross against his shoulder. Joining them is the Holy Spirit, imaged as a dove and extending its wings to the mouths of the Father and the babe. Other illuminations present the babe descending headlong and bearing a cross (after he departs the throne of God); behind him is the Holy Spirit, a dove descending; and above is the Father, who from the heavens uplifts his left hand in a gesture of farewell. Such visual arrangements dramatize the reconciliation of the opposing claims of justice and mercy, achieved through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. At the throne of the Divine Persons, the virtues are holding hands and kissing, a visualization of Psalm 85. Another depiction has justice and mercy at the scene of the Crucifixion, on opposite sides of Christ who simultaneously satisfies justice while he advocates mercy.<sup>22</sup> Some iconographers cite depictions in which the virtues are nailing Christ to the cross.<sup>23</sup> With reference to these traditions, Samuel C. Chew states that the allegorical personification of the virtues externally projects a debate "within the Mind of God."<sup>24</sup>

Alternatively, all three Divine Persons, anthropomorphically rendered in the manner of Abraham's three visitors, are enthroned together. The Son is often located at the center, flanked by the Father (holding an orb and wearing a tiara) to the viewer's left, and the Spirit is on the right. With a stole, green in color to signify hope and crossed at his heart to suggest that he undergoes sympathetic or empathic heartbreak at the Crucifixion, the Holy Spirit, figured as an angel or a winged man, assists the Son in holding the Bible. With each one of them placing a hand on the Bible—the Son above the book, the Spirit below it—their collaboration in disseminating the "word of God" is stressed.<sup>25</sup> And the Spirit

<sup>21</sup>See Traver, *ibid.*, 104-105.

<sup>22</sup>PMM 799, 12F8 7v (Breviary, Lombardy, ca. 1475).

<sup>23</sup>See Chew, *ibid.*, fol. 163, plates 2, 5, 7. See also PMM 132, 3B2 158 (Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, France, ca. 1380). For illuminations of the Son enthroned or descending as a babe, see PMM 331, 4E4 154v (Missal, France, ca. 1400, the Troyes Master); PMM 945, 14G4 85 ("Hours of Catherine of Cleves," Utrecht, ca. 1440).

<sup>24</sup>Schiller, *ibid.*, II, 137-40 and plates 448, 450-52, 454.

<sup>25</sup>Chew, *ibid.*, 37, 46-47.

may be depicted as a winged man or an angel at the one end of the grouping, which includes the Son at the center and the Father to the viewer's left. In one illumination of this kind, the Spirit and the Father collaborate in propping up the Son, who has already undergone the Passion and Death. The bloody Son stands with his feet on the convex exterior of the earth, which serves as his footstool.<sup>26</sup>

When the virtues are not depicted in art, the debate in the mind of God is further emphasized, for the viewer's attention is drawn exclusively to the portrayals of the Divine Persons, at times expressively rendered. *Cite de Dieu*, a sixteenth-century manuscript, shows the Father and the Son, virtually identical in appearance, enthroned alongside each other and holding an open Bible that faces the viewer. Between the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit, figured as a dove and uniting the other Divine Persons with the tips of its outstretched wings against their mouths. If the claims of justice and mercy are initially opposed, then the intercession of the Holy Spirit brings about reconciliation or peace. By "extending" himself to the other Divine Persons and by becoming the means of their mutual agreement, the Holy Spirit informs the discourse in the triune godhead with the fullness of his gifts and virtues. Another version of divine deliberation in a fifteenth-century manuscript shows the three Persons standing—the Father at the viewer's left; at the center the Holy Spirit anthropomorphically rendered but with a dove in his nimbus; and the Son at the right supports a large cross in the crook of his left arm. The Son's left hand extends upward in a gesture of farewell. The left hand of the Spirit touches the upright beam of the cross, while his left wrist is held by the Son's right hand. On the other side, the Father is restraining the Holy Spirit, whose right wrist is being held by the Father's left hand. Nowhere are the central role of the Holy Spirit, the interaction among the Divine Persons, and the debate in the mind of God, as well as the dilemma in his will, more expressively dramatized.<sup>27</sup>

If, however, expressiveness includes poignancy, then iconography of the crucifixion provides the consummate examples of a passionate godhead, in contrast to the traditional divine attribute of imperturbability. Most depictions of the crucifixion expectedly focus on the Son, but a countervailing movement in art involves all three Divine Persons, and most importantly the Holy Spirit, in this central event of the Redemption. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts show the Father enthroned above and behind Christ crucified. With arms downstretched, the Father holds the extremities of the transverse beam of the crucifix close to where the nails have entered the Son's hands. The base of the crucifix at which Christ's feet are nailed is between the feet of the Father. In other words, directly in front of himself, the enthroned Father props up the crucified Son, both of whom are often united by the Spirit, zoomorphically

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<sup>26</sup>PMM 945, 14G3 77v ("Hours of Catherine of Cleves," Utrecht, ca. 1440).

<sup>27</sup>PMM 421, 5G4 15v (Book of Hours, Belgium, perhaps Tournai, ca. 1445).

rendered, whose outstretched wings or whose beak and tail feathers touch their faces, usually their mouths.<sup>28</sup> Despite their union, the Father may avert his gaze from the Son because the burden of grief in witnessing such a painful death would be too heavy. Or the head of the Father may be slumped to the one side or the other, signifying an empathic death at the time that the Son expires.<sup>29</sup> Masaccio's well-known *Trinity*, an early fifteenth-century fresco in Santa Maria Novella at Florence, manifests many such features.

When the Trinity and Crucifixion are thus simultaneously depicted, with Christ's sacrifice superimposed on the throne of God, the resultant artistic image is often called the throne of grace from which "merciful judgment" (the reconciliation of mercy and justice) may issue. Related iconography involves the return of Christ heavenward after the crucifixion to be enthroned again with the Father and the Holy Spirit. His return is the emphasis of El Greco's *Trinity*, also known as *Throne of Grace*. His bloody wounds still evident, the dead Son is supported on the Father's lap. With his right hand and right knee, the Father (*Pater Dolorosus*) is elevating the Son from recumbency to a sitting position, typical of Spanish and Italian versions of the *pieta*. The Father gazes intently at the face of the dead Son, while the dove, wings extended, overshadows them.

El Greco's painting provides an apt conclusion to the present survey of the Holy Spirit in art. Significantly, the triangular configuration of the Trinity unfolds with the Holy Spirit, the dove, at the apex; along the base rest the Father and the Son. At the same time, the Holy Spirit looms large in animating divine deliberation and in characterizing the deity as passionate. As a result, the interaction among the Divine Persons becomes more comprehensible to humankind and more similar to human experience. Equally important, such characterization of the godhead prepares the way for Reformation and Counter-Reformation theology and spirituality, wherein humankind's interpersonal and intersubjective relationship with the godhead is stressed. If the Protestant post-Reformation theologian John Milton is correct—that divine deliberation is a debate in the mind, and a dilemma in the will, of God—then humankind more closely resembles the image of its creator, an image nowhere more highlighted and dramatized than in art.

ALBERT C. LABRIOLA and GEORGE S. WORGUL, JR.

Duquesne University  
Pittsburgh

<sup>28</sup>Didron, *ibid.*, II, 63-64 and fig. 143.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 66-72 and figs. 144-46; Schiller, *ibid.*, II, 122-24 and plates 411-14. See also PMM 710, 10E8 132v (Missal, Weingarten Abbey, Germany, c. 1200-1232); PMM 324, 4E3 145 (Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, France, middle of the 14th century).