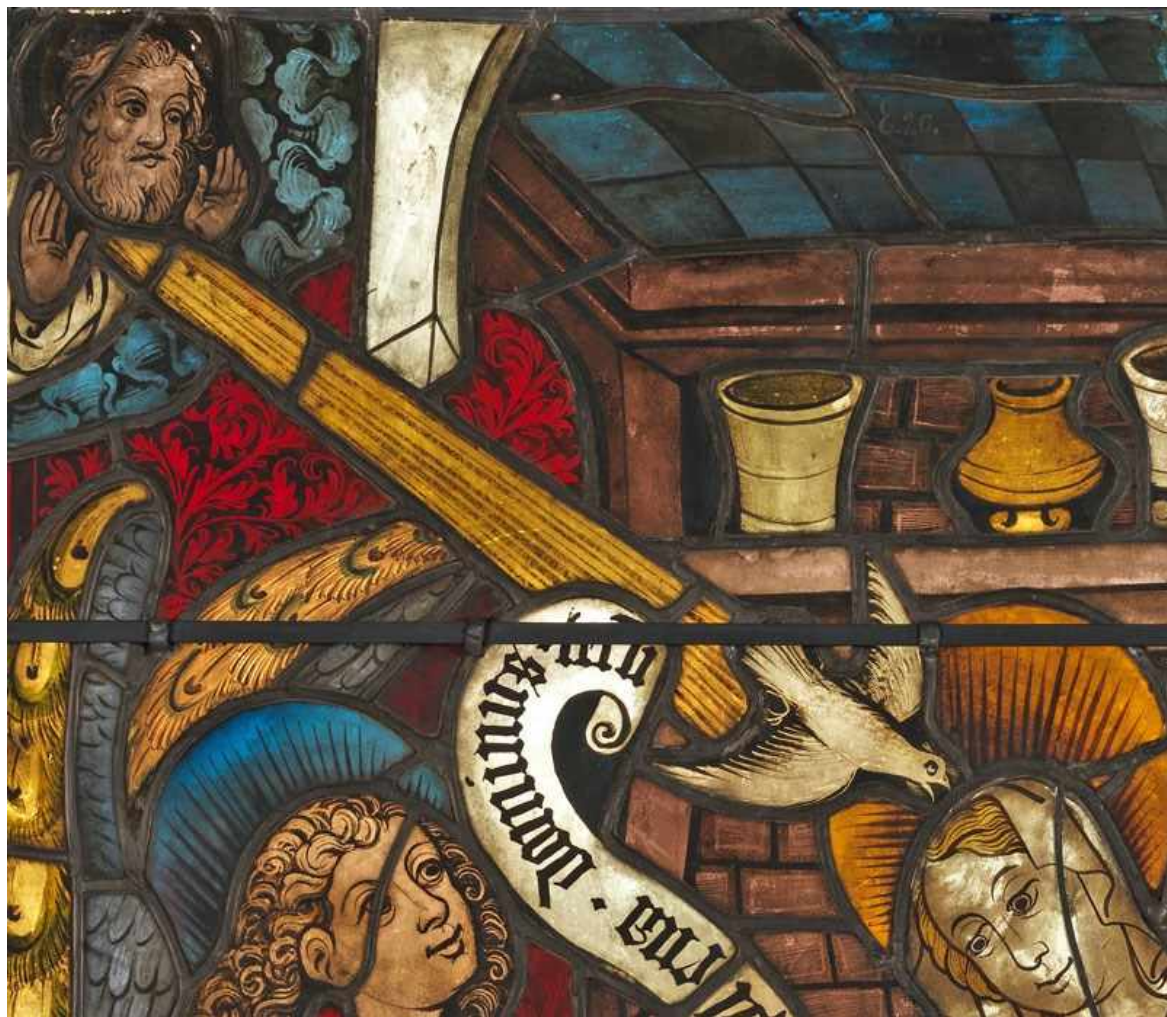


## 37. Depicting God

Depictions of God appear throughout art in the medieval period up until the Reformation, and can be seen in many stained glass panels and other objects based on a wide variety of Christian themes. God can be found represented as God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit, and different combinations of the three. The 8th Commandment panel from Boppard includes an image that appears to be of God the Father. He is shown emerging from a cluster of clouds, to demonstrate that he is in heaven. God holds the scroll with the 8th commandment written on it and is looking down benevolently upon the righteous.



DETAILS FROM THE BOPPARD  
8TH COMMANDMENT (ABOVE)  
AND ANNUNCIATION (LEFT) PANELS

The Annunciation panel from Boppard also contains an image of God. The Annunciation scene usually has a representation of God in one form or another. The Boppard Annunciation panel shows a smiling friendly God with a shaft of light bursting from him and a dove, representing the Holy Spirit which will become the baby Jesus, pointing towards Mary.

Depictions of God the Father with God the Holy Spirit, in the form of the dove, carrying out his work are quite common, and can be found in other depictions of the Annunciation in the Burrell Collection.

The Nottingham alabaster, shown earlier in the “Life of Christ and The Virgin panels –The Annunciation” blog, shows God with an excellent beard turning into a dove for the same effect.



DETAIL – NOTTINGHAM ALABASTER – ANNUNCIATION



Two more examples of the Annunciation scene in the collection are of interest, one a painted glass roundel with silver stain (a technique which we will be discussing later – see our glossary in the meantime), and one in ivory.



16TH CENTURY ANNUNCIATION ROUNDEL ABOVE  
AND 14TH CENTURY IVORY CARVING ON THE LEFT

Both show God as the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering above Mary. The roundel is South Netherlandish, dating to the early 16th century. The ivory carving is a leaf from a diptych made in France in the 14th century.

Finally there is an unusual depiction of the Holy Trinity. The alabaster above was carved in Nottingham, England, around 1400. It shows God the Father sitting on a throne and holding a napkin containing the souls of the saved above his crucified Son. Traces of red polychrome are on the lining of God's robe and on his lips and traces of blue on his eyes. There is gilding on his crown and hair. Christ's nimbus is red and black and the base has traces of green.

The depiction of God the Father with souls in a napkin in place of the Holy Spirit is quite rare in English alabaster carvings. There are three examples in the Victoria & Albert Museum and another in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [W.L. Hildburgh, 'Iconographical Peculiarities in English Medieval Alabaster Carvings', *Folklore* XLIV (1933), pp. 50-56, PL IV, Figs. 8&9].

The Burrell group is one of the finest English alabaster carvings, possessing a solemnity and grandeur rarely seen in English late Gothic sculpture.



ALABASTER HOLY TRINITY – ENGLISH