

THE HOLY TRINITY ALABASTER CARVING



Nottingham; c.1400 Alabaster; 89 x 34.7cm

Burrell reg. no. 1/2 (Inv.19)

God the Father enthroned holds a napkin containing the souls of the saved above his crucified Son. The group is flat on the reverse, roughly finished and slightly hollowed out. Red polychrome survives on the lining of the Almighty's robe and on his lips. Traces of blue polychromy on God's eyes and gilding on his crown and hair. Christ's nimbus is red and black and the base has green polychromy. Some of the saved in the napkin are damaged, but otherwise the panel is in good condition.

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 (Reg. nos. 901-1905, A. 28-1946, 10-1882) and another in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Accession no. 27.852) [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. Pevsner dated it around 1375-80 at the latest, but the unagitated drapery folds suggest that the group was carved around 1400.

Provenance: Purchased from John Hunt, 25.11.1938

Exhibitions: London, British Medieval Art (1939). York City Art Gallery, English Medieval Alabaster Carvings-(1954), no.76 (illus. on cover). Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum (1959). London Museum, Chaucer's London (1972) no.263 (illus. 16 in booklet). Arts Council. Treasures from The Burrell Collection (1975), no.366.

Bibliography: N.Pevsner 'An Exhibition of British Medieval Art', *Burlington Magazine* (1939) p.14, Pl. D.; A. Simpson *Die Parler und der schone Stii*, Vol.IV; F.Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, Oxford 1984, p.296, fig.23.