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Author(s): Gerhart B. Ladner
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MEDIEVAL AND MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF SYMBOLISM: A COMPARISON*

BY GERHART B. LADNER

DURING THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS research on symbols and myths has greatly expanded and has produced authentic insights, especially in the general science of signs, called semiotics, and in linguistics, psychology, and anthropology. It would appear worthwhile to ask if and how the emerging new methods, in particular those of the structuralists, can be related to the study of medieval symbolism. The first part of this paper will address the question in a general way; the second and larger section will deal with one particular group of symbols.

I

The Greek noun "symbolon" is derived from the verb "symballein," meaning "to throw together, bring together, put together," also "to collect" and "to compare."

It is important to realize that in classical Greek "symbolon" was at first literally related to a "drawing together." In a meeting or party the symbols could be contributions to a shared meal.[1] In the control mechanisms of a contract, the two parts of a token, which were to be separated by the contracting parties and brought together again, were called *symbola* and had the function of tallies.[2] In both cases there is an element of contrast (there are at least two "partners" in a party or in a contract) and an element of likeness (the "partners" share a purpose or the "parts" fit together). Thus even the earliest terminology implied that the symbol is different in some ways from that which it represents and nevertheless in some ways similar or

* This paper is a revised and annotated version of the presidential address delivered on April 14, 1978, at the Annual Meeting of the Mediaeval Academy of America, held at Yale University.

[1] Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Dictionary,* s.v. σύμβολον I, 3, also s.v. συμβολή III.

[2] Ibid., s.v. σύμβολον I, 2. For a fuller history of the Greek term to the fourth century A.D., see W. Müri, ΣΥΜΒΟΛΟΝ: *Wort- und sachgeschichtliche Studie,* Beilage zum Jahresbericht über das Städtische Gymnasium in Bern (Bern, 1931); cf. also M. Schlesinger, *Geschichte des Symbols* (Berlin, 1912; repr. Hildesheim, 1967), pp. 5 ff.

even one with it.[3] These are general traits of symbolism to which I shall have to return more than once.

All the various meanings that we still attach to the term symbol go back to pagan or Christian antiquity. The Fathers of the Church used the term in two senses. They spoke of a Symbol of the Christian Faith, by which they meant the Creed. It was a "drawing together," a summary and token, of the main truths and doctrines of Christianity.[4] This remained the principal meaning of symbol in the medieval West; it is still important in Christian theology and liturgy, above all in the so-called Symbols or Creeds of the Apostles and of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.[5]

The second meaning of symbol that was current in early Christian times has much wider applications, and it is the one that is chiefly relevant for our topic. Here symbol is very close to, or even synonymous with, *semeion*, *signum*, sign — Origen says that whatever happens in an unexpected or strange way in Holy Scripture is a "semeion kai symbolon," a sign or symbol, of something else, namely of something beyond the realm of sense experience.[6]

"Symbolon" as a term that means a sign with deeply spiritual and even mystical meaning appears full-fledged in the Greek Christian world around the year 500, in the works of the great unknown who calls himself Dionysius the Areopagite. The title of the second chapter of his treatise *On the Heavenly Hierarchy* announces its contents by stating that the divine and heavenly fittingly appear also in symbols which have no obvious likeness to those exalted realms.[7] The meaning of the whole chapter is that since God is so high above human conception, it may be more revealing to express the divine and heavenly by phenomena taken from the lower reaches of the created cosmos than it is to choose symbols that superficially seem closer to God. Thus, using biblical symbolism, he says that not only the light of the sun or the stars, but also a wild animal, such as a lion, or a stone rejected by a builder, may be symbols of Christ.[8]

[3] For the distinctness of similarity and unity, and related distinctions of analogy from participation and metaphor from metonymy and synecdoche, see below, passim.

[4] For *symbolon* as password, formula of belief, and sacrament in the non-Christian mystery cults of antiquity, see Müri, op. cit., pp. 39 ff.

[5] See J. de Ghellinck, *Les recherches sur les origines du symbole des apôtres = Patristique et moyen âge*, 1 (Gembloux, Bruxelles, Paris, 1949).

[6] Origen, *In Joann.* 13.60, PG 14:521: οὐκ ἔστι τι παράδοξον γενόμενον ἐν τῇ Γραφῇ, ὃ μὴ ἐστι σημεῖον και σύμβολον ἑτέρου παρὰ τὸ αἰσθητῶς γεγενημένον.

[7] Ps.-Dionysius, *De coelesti hierarchia,* cap. 2, PG 3:136: Ὅτι πρεπόντως τὰ θεῖα καὶ οὐράνια καὶ διὰ τῶν ἀνομοίων συμβόλων ἐκφαίνεται.

[8] Ibid., p. 144 C ff.: Καὶ ποτὲ μὲν αὐτὴν (i.e., divine government) ἀπὸ τῶ φαινομένων τιμίων ὑμνοῦσιν, ὡς ἥλιον δικαιοσύνης (Malach. 4.2), ὡς ἀστέρα τὸν ἑῷον (Apoc. 22.16) . . . ποτὲ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐσχάτων . . . ὡς λίθον ἀκρογωνιαῖον (Ephes. 2.20). 'Αλλὰ καὶ θηριομορφίαν αὐτῇ περιτιθέασι, καὶ λέοντος αὐτῇ καὶ πάνθηρος ἰδιότητα περιάπτουσι (Osee 13.7) . . . (145A) Οὐδὲν οὐν ἄτοπον, εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐρανίας οὐσίας ἐκ τῶν ἀπεμφαινουσῶν ἀνομοίων ὁμοιοτήτων ἀναπλάττουσι. . . . This kind of argumentation is symptomatic for the influence of Proclus on the Pseudo-Dionysius. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien* (Paris, 1954), p. 115, J. A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm: Theories of Interpretation of the Later Neoplatonists* (Leiden, 1976), p. 50; J. Pépin, "Aspects théoriques du symbolisme dans la tradition dionysienne," *Simboli e simbologia*

I shall cite only one Latin commentator on the Areopagite, from the twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor.[9] A text from Hugh's commentary on the *Heavenly Hierarchy* is quite characteristic of the medieval understanding of symbolism: "A symbol is a collecting of visible forms for the demonstration of invisible things."[10] "Collecting" translates *collatio*, which itself is an almost literal translation of the Greek *symballein*.

In the examples from Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Hugh of St. Victor, symbols are understood to form a bridge between the experience of the senses and that which lies or reaches beyond. In this understanding symbols are referred ultimately to the coexistence of similarity and dissimilarity between creatures and God, which the Middle Ages conceived as the analogy of being.[11] This was one of the two principal medieval ways to think of the world-God relationship, the other being participation tending toward unity.

Except in the context of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition, however, the Latin term "symbolum" was rarely used in the Middle Ages to refer, not to the Creed, but to the more general concept of symbol. Apparently other terms and concepts were considered more appropriate for this meaning in the Latin West. The most important of these was the term "signum," sign. For Origen sign and symbol could be synonymous terms. In St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* the term *signum* completely absorbed the meaning of symbol.[12] Among the several fundamental distinctions that Augustine made in this connection, two are most important. The first is the distinction between *signa naturalia* and *signa data*,[13] the latter being "given," that is to say, instituted by man or by God. In the Middle Ages, man-made *signa data* are, for example, the so-called insignia, political or ecclesiastical signs of rulership or office such as royal or imperial crowns, sceptres, mantles, etc., episcopal and papal mitres, tiaras, staffs, and liturgical or nonliturgical

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nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 23, 1 (Spoleto, 1976), pp. 33 ff.

[9] For the earlier use of the Pseudo-Dionysian term symbol by John Scot, see M. Cappuyns, O.S.B., *Jean Scot Erigène* (Louvain, 1933; repr. Brussels, 1964), p. 295, notes 1 and 2, and E. De Bruyne, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, 1 (Brugge, 1946), pp. 342 ff.; Pépin, op. cit., passim.

[10] Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentar. in Hierarchiam Coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae* 2 (to cap. 1), PL 175:941B: "symbolum est collatio formarum visibilium ad invisibilium demonstrationem."

[11] That in the analogy between God and creatures similarity can never be so perfect as to "catch up" with dissimilarity, was expressed as follows in the Acts of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), cap. 2, Denzinger-Umberg, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 21st–23rd ed. (Freiburg i. B., 1937), 202: ". . . quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda."

[12] See especially *De doctrina christiana* 1.4 (1.2.2), CSEL 80, p. 9; 2.1–5 (2.1–3.4), ibid., pp. 33 ff.; 2.32 f. (2.10.15), ibid., p. 42; 2.57–65 (2.16.23–25), ibid., pp. 49 ff. (on the various kinds of *signa translata* and on symbolical numbers); 3.87–91 (3.29.40–41), ibid., pp. 103 f. (on tropes). See also J. Chydenius, "La théorie du symbolisme médiéval," *Poétique* 21 (1975), 322–327.

[13] *De doctrina christiana* 2.2, p. 34: "Signorum igitur alia sunt naturalia, alia data. Naturalia sunt quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem"; 2.3, ibid.: "Data vero signa sunt quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant . . . et signa divinitus data quae scripturis sanctis continentur, per homines nobis indicata sunt, qui ea conscripserunt."

vestments, and many other signs designating various orders, ranks, and dignities.[14]

Augustine's second important distinction is between *signa propria* — such as words — and *signa translata*. These latter are combinations of a primary and a secondary signification. For instance, in the biblical text about the ox who toils and therefore should be fed, the word *bos*, "ox" — which is first a *signum proprium* for a domestic animal — also signifies the spiritual man who deserves to be materially supported because of his labors.[15] Such *signa translata* are more than mere signs or *signa propria*; as the terminology of "translation" indicates, they are closer to tropes such as metaphor or metonymy.

It was on a basis of *significatio* that the Western Middle Ages conceptualized a universe of symbols in which, with the sole exception of God, everything could signify something else. Thus man, the microcosm, was a symbol of the universe, the macrocosm,[16] and individual personalities could symbolize entire movements of the mind.[17] Above all, material things signified spiritual things or even God himself.

To this symbolic universe there corresponded a sacred rhetoric, in which tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, and allegory played a considerable role. Allegory was especially important; among other things it was one of the spiritual senses of Holy Scripture, the sense in which the events of the Old Testament were prototypes or prefigurations of the Christian dispensation.[18] One therefore calls this kind of allegory typological or figurative.[19] It had

[14] See especially P. E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, 3 vols., Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica 13, 1–3 (Stuttgart 1954–1956); cf. J. M. Bak, "Medieval Symbology of the State: Percy E. Schramm's Contribution," *Viator* 4 (1973), 33 ff. See also R. Elze, "Insegne del potere sovrano e delegato in Occidente," *Simboli e simbologia nell'alto medioevo* = Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 23, 2 (Spoleto, 1976), pp. 569 ff.; T. Klauser, *Der Ursprung der bischöflichen Insignien und Ehrenrechte*, Rektoratsrede Bonn 11. Dez. 1948 (Krefeld, 1949); P. Salmon, *Etude sur les insignes du pontife dans le rit romain* (Rome, 1955); and G. B. Ladner, "Der Ursprung und die mittelalterliche Entwicklung der päpstlichen Tiara," to appear in *Tainia Roland Hampe zum 70. Geburtstag am 2. Dezember 1978 dargebracht* (Mainz, 1979).

[15] *De doctrina christiana* 2.32 f., p. 42: "Sunt autem signa vel propria vel translata. Propria dicuntur, cum his rebus significandis adhibentur propter quas sunt instituta, sicut dicimus bovem, cum intellegimus pecus. . . . Translata sunt, cum et ipsae res quas propriis verbis significamus, ad aliquid aliud significandum usurpantur . . . per illud pecus intellegimus evangelistam, quem significavit scriptura interpretante apostolo dicens: *Bovem triturantem non infrenabis* (1 Cor. 9.9)."

[16] Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "L'homme comme symbole, le microcosme," *Simboli e Simbologia* (n. 8 above), 1:123 ff.

[17] See Etienne Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie* (Paris, 1939), pp. 289 ff.: "Sur deux familles de symboles dantesques."

[18] H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959–1964), passim.

[19] See, for instance, E. Auerbach, "Figura," *Archivum Romanicum* 22 (1938), 436 ff.; J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri: Etudes sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris, 1950); id., *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1956); and G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London, 1957). See also A. Strubel, " 'Allegoria in factis' et 'Allegoria in verbis'," *Poétique* 21 (1975), 342 ff.: this was a distinction made by the Venerable Bede between biblical and rhetorical allegory and also between the spiritual and the literal senses of exegesis.

previously been used in pre-Christian, Greco-Roman antiquity for the intellectual interpretation of myths and of their poetic expression, principally in Homer.[20] In Christian times, too, the allegorical method of interpreting one thing as the image of another was applied to the secular literature of antiquity (as one way of accommodating and partially Christianizing it) — for instance, to the myths of Plato or Ovid. The method could even serve to create novel quasi-myths, based on personifications — for instance, in Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, a battle between vices and virtues for the human soul, and in Alanus of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, where Nature sends Prudence to God, who then creates a new and perfect man. Or it could be applied to new symbols such as the Grail.[21] We shall have occasion to look from different angles at the interrelations between metaphor, myth, and allegory on the one hand and metonymy-synecdoche, history, and symbol on the other. We shall see also how these distinctions are connected with another very important contrast, namely that between analogy — based on similarity (and dissimilarity) — and participation — tending toward hierarchical unity. Needless to say, analogy-similarity[21a] and participation-unity are equally crucial aspects of medieval ideology, and they supplement each other. This is in no way surprising, since these ideas were manifest in the God-man relationship according to the Old and New Testaments, respectively: see Genesis 1.26, "Let us make man to our image and likeness," and 2 Peter 1.4, "that you may be partakers of the divine nature . . ."; see also Matthew 5.9, Romans 8.14–17, Galatians 3.26–28, and above all 1 John 3.2.

I may refer here in advance to the exemplifications in Part II of this paper, where the metaphorical, analogical, and comparative symbolism of consanguinity trees as well as the metonymical or synechdochic, participatory, and unitive symbolisms of the Cross as *Lignum vitae,* of the Tree of Jesse, and of other tree schemes will be discussed.

What we call symbol, then, certainly comes close to one or another of the Augustinian meanings of *signum,* though in modern terminologies "sign" and "symbol" can overlap in many ways, and in ways that do not entirely accord with medieval usage. It was one of the fundamental character traits of the early Christian and medieval mentalities that the signifying, symbolizing, and allegorizing function was anything but arbitrary or subjective; symbols were believed to represent objectively and to express faithfully various aspects of a universe that was perceived as widely and deeply meaningful. It has often been noted, and most recently and impressively demonstrated by Michel Foucault in *Les mots et les choses*,[22] that much of this medieval attitude

[20] Cf. J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris, 1958).

[21] All this is so well known that it hardly needs verification, but see, for instance, Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Mediaeval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton, 1966).

[21a] For similarity and comparison in high medieval epical literature see F. P. Knapp, *Similitudo: Stil- und Erzählfunktion von Vergleich und Exempel in der lateinischen, französischen und deutschen Grossepik des Hochmittelalters,* 1 (Vienna, Stuttgart, 1975), esp. pp. 138–150.

[22] M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966).

continued far into modern times.[23] It is only during the last hundred years that the meaningfulness of symbols and the meaning of symbolizing have become problematic.

On the one hand, many of the old symbols had lost their strength, if not their validity; on the other hand, science, philosophy, and art became more deeply involved than ever in symbolism, but in new ways, in many instances stressing the arbitrariness and subjectivity of signs and symbols rather than their correspondence with an objective reality. Leaving aside mathematical and logical symbolism, I shall attempt to characterize certain late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in the fields of semiotics, linguistics, and anthropology, concentrating on those which seem to me particularly relevant for the study of medieval symbolism. Even first approximations — and I cannot offer more than that — may prove to be worthwhile. With the same reservation, I shall also introduce for the purpose of comparison one example of the psychoanalytic interpretation of symbols and, at the end, turn briefly to the poetry and art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when a great revival of symbolism occurred.

The greatest figures in semiotics and linguistics at the turn of the century were Charles Sanders Peirce of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Ferdinand de Saussure of Geneva. In Peirce's elaborate classification of signs, the symbol symbolizes on the strength of convention and habit;[24] it would seem that the relationship between the signifying and the signified was largely an arbitrary one for him.[25] The same could be said of Saussure,[26] but whereas Peirce was primarily a logician, Saussure inaugurated a version of semiotics or *sémiologie* that was emphatically based on linguistics. He showed that it was possible to look at language as a structured system of linguistic symbols, in which arbitrary but repeated decisions are made as to what sounds to use and not to use in order to form words, and what words to use and not to use in order to signify concepts and to form sentences at given moments of time. Such "yes-no" decisions make language a structure of differences, mainly of binary opposites, in other words a system of polarities of words as well as of sounds.[27] The regularity of these binary choices may perhaps contribute to

[23] See the English translation of *Mots et choses*, entitled *The Order of Things* (New York, 1970), especially the chapters on "The Four Similitudes" and on "Signatures," pp. 17 ff. and 25 ff., respectively.

[24] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 167 f., §297, also pp. 172 f., §307.

[25] T. Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977), p. 129.

[26] As far as I know, Peirce (1839–1914) and Saussure (1857–1913) worked quite independently from one another, and developed their conceptions of "semiotic" and "*sémiologie*" independently.

[27] F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, ed. T. De Mauro (after the edition of C. Bally, A. Sechehaye, and A. Riedlinger) (Paris, 1975), p. 100: "le signe linguistique est arbitraire"; ibid., p. 167: "Tout le méchanisme du langage . . . repose sur les oppositions . . . et sur les differences phoniques et conceptuelles qu'elles impliquent." See also the critical edition by R. Engler, Fasz. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1967), p. 152, § 1123 and pp. 273 ff., § 1958 ff. See further Hawkes, op. cit., pp. 22

making language an ordered structure, preventing the confusion of a Tower of Babel. And yet, linguistic symbolism — and any symbolism — if it fulfills all its potentialities includes unification beside polarity; and the unifying aspect of symbolism means among other things that it comprises besides metaphor, which is based on similarity and analogy, also metonymy with its connotations of contiguity or contact, participation, and hierarchy. It is above all Roman Jakobson who has stressed the importance of both metonymy and metaphor as figures of speech and configurations of thought not only in linguistics but also in literature and literary symbolism and in human behavior in general.[28]

It is well known that Saussure's linguistic structuralism stands behind the interpretation of primitive myths and indirectly of symbols by the most original of the structuralist anthropologists of our time, Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose work is a great achievement of imaginative and logical analysis of the basic forms of human life. It is his way of dealing with myths and symbols which in my opinion is of the greatest methodological interest for a comparative study of symbolism. In the world of primitive myth, as described by Lévi-Strauss, gods, men, animals, plants, and stones live together in a system of structures which are formed by binary opposites. These polarities may be different substances, such as honey and ashes,[29] and indeed any contrasting pairs of natural phenomena,[30] or opposite modes of the life of man, such as eating raw or cooked food;[31] this latter pair of opposites is related to the

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ff., for a good explanation of the system of language according to Saussure, and R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague, 1956), pp. 47 ff., for the prevalence of a dichotomous structure, and especially of binary oppositions, in language (but cf. the doubts about universal binarism in R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith [New York, 1977], pp. 80 ff.).

[28] See Jakobson and Halle, op. cit., p. 79; cf. also J. A. Boon, *From Symbolism to Structuralism: Lévi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 73 ff. The contrast between metaphor and metonymy is linked to Saussure's and Lévi-Strauss's distinction of synchronic (associative and simultaneous-ahistorical) and diachronic (syntagmatic and sequential-historical) structures, metaphor corresponding to the former, metonymy to the latter. For the distinction — likewise important in our context — between the part-part character of metonymy and the part-whole character of synecdoche, see the excellent remarks of H. White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore, London, 1973), pp. 31–37, and cf. below, pp. 250–51. As to the related contrast between analogy and participation it is admittedly one of degree only, since both contain elements of polarity and unity, of similarity and of dissimilarity. Nevertheless, it may be said only of analogy that it requires polarity as its extreme limit (cf. note 11) and only of participation that it requires unity as its consummation.

[29] Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Du miel aux cendres* (*Mythologiques,* 2) (Paris, 1966); English translation, *From Honey to Ashes*, by J. and D. Weightman (New York, 1973).

[30] See the vast systems of polarized and at the same time analogical classifications described by Lévi-Strauss in *La pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1962), English translation *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, 1966), especially chapters 2: "The Logic of Totemic Classifications," 3: "Systems of Transformation," and 5: "Categories, Elements, Species, Numbers" — for instance, the diagram of analogous polarities on p. 93 of the English edition. See also Hawkes, op. cit., pp. 52 f., on the role of the analogy of opposites in Lévi-Strauss.

[31] Lévi-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit* (*Mythologiques*, 1) (Paris, 1964), English translation, *The Raw and the Cooked*, by J. and D. Weightman (New York, 1969).

polarity of fire and water. In a sense these polarities are symbolic, for, as Lévi-Strauss I think has demonstrated, they are reducible to the penultimate polarity of culture and nature, which again are linked in an ambivalent relationship to the ultimate polarity of life and death.[32] Perhaps one may call this dualism of primitive myth — or at least the structuralist interpretation of it — Manichaean, since the two poles or opposites seem to be of equal strength. This symbolism is at any rate far removed from that of the Christian Middle Ages.[32a]

For the latter, the universe was an exemplarist and anagogical as well as analogical, a hierarchical as well as gradualistic multiverse; it was in no way a structure of irreducible opposites. The phenomena of nature were *vestigia Dei*, the footprints or tracks of the one God, who had created them along with time; men and their works were seen in the light of Adam's and Eve's privileged creation in the image and likeness of God.[33] The pagan gods of myth could be tolerated by identifying them with heroes — in Euhemeristic historization — or with cosmic phenomena — especially in astrology — or with universal ideas — personified in allegories of moral or generally philosophical-religious scope.[34]

Moreover, the symbolic world view of the Middle Ages cannot be understood without reference to a sacred history which was conceived as a coherent sequence of divinely planned happenings, from creation through the

[32] These antinomies, which are not only parallel but also crossed, permeate all of Lévi-Strauss's work. They are explicitly stated, for instance, in the first volume of the mythological tetralogy, *The Raw and the Cooked*, pp. 149 ff., with regard to the myth of the Caraja "How men lost immortality," and at the end of the last volume, *L'homme nu* (*Mythologiques*, 4) (Paris, 1971), pp. 620 f., expressed in terms of Hamlet's "To be or not to be".

[32a] This is not to deny the existence in medieval symbolism "of polar forms . . . within a prevailing system of values," as clearly shown for the language of art by Meyer Schapiro in his *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague, Paris, 1973), p. 78 and passim. The realization that art is among other things a unifying as well as individualizing symbolic language, I owe my unforgotten teacher Julius v. Schlosser. See, for instance, his " 'Stilgeschichte' und 'Sprachgeschichte' der bildenden Kunst," *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philos.-Histor. Abteilung, 1935, 1 (Munich, 1935); also his "Lebenskommentar," in *Die Kunstwissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen* (Leipzig, s.a.), pp. 124 and 127.

[33] This hardly needs documentation, but see my article "Eikon," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1959). For an excellent synthesis see E. Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure,* 3rd ed. (Paris, 1953): pp. 119 ff. on the divine exemplarism expressed in creation and esp. 165 ff. on the Platonic-Augustinian-Bonaventurian unitive type of analogy, which includes the *vestigia Dei* in nature and the *imago Dei* in man and differs considerably from the largely, though of course not entirely, separative Aristotelian-Thomistic analogy between God and creatures; cf. op. cit., pp. 189 ff. and also 304 ff., esp. 355, on grades and hierarchy according to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum.* See also Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin,* 3rd ed. (Paris, 1949), pp. 275–281, on similarity, participation, and unity according to Augustine.

[34] See for instance, J. Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods,* Bollingen Series 38 (New York, 1953); also F. v. Bezold, *Das Fortleben der antiken Götter im mittelalterlichen Humanismus* (Bonn, Leipzig, 1922). See also above, p. 227.

events of the Old and New Testaments and the salvation-oriented progression of mankind.[35] The mythical world of primitive peoples on the other hand can be considered in Lévi-Straussian terms as timeless.[36] Just as language in the original structuralist view, so the world of myth is seen here not as primarily historical or diachronic — that is to say, successional — but as primarily synchronic — that is to say, as a simultaneousness.[37] Lévi-Strauss conceives of myths chiefly as phenomena formed in certain social situations at a certain moment of time, paralleled by equivalent and simultaneous phenomena in often far distant geographical locations.

It is not by accident that his great four-part work on primitive thought is called *Mythologiques*, not *Symboliques*. Lévi-Strauss sees primitive myths essentially as stories, and rightly so. This, incidentally, was also the way in which myth could be looked at in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages; in the Latin West myth was therefore often called *fabula*.[38] Symbols, on the other hand, at least as understood in the Middle Ages, are objects or events which have a wider meaning that reaches beyond stories and their structure.[39] Medieval symbols have a definite place in sacred history or in consecrated nature. Let us think, for instance, of the Cross of Christ and also of its secondary symbolism, according to which the four cross arms represent the four directions of the universe, a cosmic cross.[40]

Substantial differences between symbol and myth have lately been pointed out by Paul Ricoeur;[41] myth, gnosis, and allegory are for him successive and

[35] For instance, E. Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1944), pp. 365 ff., ch. 19: "Le moyen âge et l'histoire"; M.-D. Chenu, O.P., *La théologie au douxième siècle* (Paris, 1957), pp. 62ff., Part 1, ch. 3: "Conscience de l'histoire et théologie," especially pp. 66 f.; see also the English translation by J. Taylor and L. K. Little: *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 162 ff., especially pp. 168 ff.

[36] Cf. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 263: "The characteristic feature of the savage mind is its timelessness."

[37] I believe this remains true, in spite of the fact that Lévi-Strauss does not adhere to Saussure's strict distinction of "synchronic" and "diachronic" (cf. his article, "L'anthropologie sociale devant l'histoire," *Annales* 15 [1960], 635 f.). See *The Savage Mind*, ch. 8: "Time Regained," especially pp. 232 ff., and ch. 9: "History and Dialectic," esp. p. 262 f. — diachrony can be subordinated to synchrony — and above all the impressive pages in the last volume of *Mythologiques* (4, *L'homme nu*) (Paris, 1971), pp. 540 ff., especially 542 f.: "Poussée jusqu' à son terme, l'analyse des symboles atteint un niveau où l'histoire s'annule elle-même."

[38] P. Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden, Köln, 1974), p. 5 and passim.

[39] J. Le Goff, in his otherwise valuable study "Les gestes symboliques dans la vie sociale: Les gestes de la vassalité," *Simboli e Simbologia* (n. 8 above), 2:679 ff., goes even beyond Lévi-Strauss when — following D. Sperber, *Le symbolisme en général* (Paris, 1974; see also the English version, *Rethinking Symbolism*, Cambridge, 1975) — he writes: "Un système symbolique ne signifie rien." It seems to me that M. Le Goff attempts to separate feudalism too radically from the religious aspects of the mentality prevailing in the Middle Ages, when he makes it move almost exclusively "dans la sphère du sacré parental" (p. 769).

[40] Cf. G. B. Ladner, "St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Augustine on the Symbolism of the Cross," *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 88 ff.

[41] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan (New York, 1967), especially pp. 9–18.

subordinate to the primary symbolism of the sacred. Jean Daniélou went even further, when he saw myths from a Christian point of view as a corruption of primary symbols: from being theophanies and hierophanies symbols can be degraded to the level of idolatries, signifying "mere biological realities projected into an ideal world."[42] Yet, at least as far as pre-Christian myth is concerned, there was truth in J. J. Bachofen's view: "Myth is the exegesis of the symbol. . . ."[43] In fact, Daniélou in his various studies and H. C. Puech[44] have shown how the typological or figurative Christianization of the ancient allegorical method of interpreting myth made possible a synthesis of cosmic-anthropological symbolism with biblical history and — we may add — post-biblical history and imagination. In the Middle Ages at any rate symbolism and allegorization were not felt to be essentially different from one another, even though non-biblical allegory through its "fabulous" character is closer to myth than symbol is.[45]

The relationship between symbol, myth, and allegory is in fact a very complicated one. The allegorization of myth by the philosophers of ancient Greece was on the whole — and notwithstanding occasional and not unnatural misgivings — amalgamated successfully by the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and at times even by Vico,[46] with an overarching symbolic world view. Modern Romanticism on the other hand saw a fundamental contrast between myth-symbol and allegory. Ernst Cassirer continued more or less the view of the Romantics,[47] whereas H. G. Gadamer emphasizes its

[42] J. Daniélou, "The Problem of Symbolism," *Thought* 25 (1950), 423 ff.

[43] J. J. Bachofen, "An Essay on Ancient Mortuary Symbolism" (1859), *Myth, Religion and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, trans. R. Manheim, Bollingen Series 84 (Princeton, 1967), pp. 48 f.

[44] See his "Temps, histoire et mythe dans le christianisme des premiers siècles," *Proceedings of the 7th Congress for the History of Religions, Amsterdam 1950*, ed. C. J. Bleeker, G. W. Drewes, K. A. H. Hidding (Amsterdam, 1951), pp. 33 ff.

[45] Medieval authors had two technical terms which were used chiefly for non-biblical allegorization: *integumentum* and *involucrum*. See, for instance, M.-D. Chenu, "Involucrum: Le mythe selon les théologiens médiévaux," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 22 (1955), 75 ff., and id., *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris, 1957), chapters 7–9 on symbolic mentality, symbolic theology, and allegorization; and H. Brinkman, "Verhüllung ('Integumentum') als literarische Darstellungsform im Mittelalter," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 8: *Der Begriff der Repraesentatio im Mittelalter: Stellvertretung, Symbol, Zeichen, Bild* (Berlin, New York, 1971), pp. 314 ff. In general, see K. W. Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth* (Nashville, 1968), pp. 159 ff., where it is suggested that myth can via allegorization return to symbolism and progress to mysticism.

[46] This is not to deny that Vico's view of myth was primarily non-allegorical and rather closely akin to that of Lévi-Strauss, though the latter does not seem to be directly influenced by him. For Vico and allegory see David Bidney, "Vico's New Science of Myth," in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo and H. V. White (Baltimore, 1969), pp. 259 ff.; for Vico and myth cf. I. Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (New York, 1977); for Vico and Lévi-Strauss cf. E. Leach, "Vico and Lévi-Strauss on the Origins of Humanity," *Giambattista Vico* (as above), pp. 309 ff.

[47] See E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 2: *Mythical Thought* (New Haven, 1955), especially pp. 3–16; also id., "Der Begriff der symbolischen Form im Aufbau der Geisteswissenschaften," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, 1921–1922 (Leipzig, Berlin, 1923), 11 ff.

limited, historically conditioned validity.[48] It is interesting also that for Cassirer as for Lévi-Strauss myth, language, and cognition are the great areas of symbolism, whereas religious symbolism is hardly considered as a phenomenon *sui generis.* This attitude runs parallel to the mutually related eighteenth- to twentieth-century phenomena of "mythologization" and "demythologization" of Christianity. A good example for a nineteenth-century mythological-symbolic interpretation of basic Christian beliefs is the well-known aesthetician Friedrich Theodor Vischer's essay, "Das Symbol" (1887).[49] More recently, a tantalizing hovering between history and myth has become part and parcel of important historical writing on medieval Christianity, for instance, by such different authors as Lynn White[50] and Wolfram von den Steinen.[51] It was not surprising that Rudolf Bultmann and others, in their efforts of demythologization, attempted to separate from the Christian kerygma not only obviously mythical accretions, but also much of what the Evangelists and Apostles undoubtedly considered as historical. Demythologization was thus a consequence of the mythologization (and gnosticization) of much in the life of Jesus and the early history of Christianity.[52]

To sum up the first part of this paper, one can observe that some of the most interesting and characteristic modern interpretations of symbolism attempt to coordinate or even identify symbols with myths, whereas in the medieval understanding and tradition of symbolism symbols were mainly seen as representing facts and events, phenomena in and beyond nature and history, in such a way that they lead to the meta-physical and meta-historical realms encompassed by faith and theology.

II

The richness of medieval symbolism is overwhelming. In the following pages, I shall concentrate on only one important and complex aspect of it, the symbolism of trees. As will soon be seen, this is a vast and quite representative subject, with many ramifications of its own.

Traditions of tree symbolism are old and widespread. In Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, which deals almost exclusively with the Indians of South and

[48] See H. G. Gadamer, "Symbol und Allegorie," *Archivio di Filosofia* 1958, nos. 2–3 = *Umanesimo e Simbolismo* (Padua, 1958), 23–28.

[49] See F. T. Vischer, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 8 (Leipzig, s.a.), pp. 312 ff., especially 319 ff.

[50] See L. White, Jr., "Christian Myth and Christian History," in *Machina ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1968), pp. 33 ff.

[51] W. v. d. Steinen, *Der Kosmos des Mittelalters* (Bern, Munich, 1959), especially pp. 12 ff.; also id., *Das Zeitalter Goethes* (Bern, 1949), pp. 356 ff.

[52] Besides Bultmann's own works, see K. Prümm, S.J., *Gnosis an der Wurzel des Christentums?: Grundlagenkritik der Entmythologisierung* (Salzburg, 1972); and R. A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing,* Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to *Numen*), 28 (Leiden, 1974). On the other hand, some Catholic theologians are finding again today that certain truths can be expressed only — or at least best — in poetic tales or myths; see, for instance, C. Duquoc, O.P., "New Approaches to Original Sin," trans. J. Cunneen, *Cross Currents* 28 (1978), 189 ff. It would go beyond the scope of this article to ponder the possibility of reconciling a genuinely Platonic conception of myth with Christian doctrine.

North America and with Australians, tree symbolism plays a relatively minor role. Still, he describes a remarkable series of myths from South America in which the discovery of a food-bearing tree is connected with the origin of mortality and death. The tree is a Tree of Life, but in various forms of the myth it is exploited or abused — for instance, by plucking its fruit or by felling it.[53] The results are ambivalently pernicious and beneficial. For instance, in some of the myths the felling of the tree could bring about an utterly destructive flood which issued from the tree stump, but the same water could also be pacified at the foot of the tree and become a preserver of life. This could happen because the water nurtured the seeds from the tree's fruit, leading to the cultivation of plants, which again was to be among the principal constituents of the beginnings of culture.[54] The other main constituent was not surprisingly the discovery of fire, which could likewise be destructive or benign, even creative, the latter especially as a means of preparing cooked food;[55] thus fire presents a second aspect of the polarities of culture and nature and of life and death which exist in these myths.[56]

Although they certainly do not lack complexity and depth, these primitive tree myths are relatively limited if we compare them with the symbolisms of the so-called higher cultures of pre-Columbian America and above all of the Mediterranean area and of the Eurasian continent. There the Tree of Life is often much more than a giver of food, much more than a link of mythical polarities. It is rather one of the most powerful symbols of world unity. The Tree of Life can be a World Tree, a tree or tree-like pillar that stands in the center of the universe and holds heaven and earth together. This tree symbolism reaches from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia to India and from Scandinavia to Siberia and the Far East.[57]

The biblical book of Daniel forms an important link between the symbolism of sacred trees in the ancient Near East and the Judeo-Christian traditions of tree symbolism in the Middle Ages. For instance, in a well-known relief of the ninth century B.C. from Ashurnasirpal II's Palace in Nimrud (now in the British Museum), the sacred tree is flanked by double images of the king and a winged deity, who together tend and worship it

[53] *The Raw and the Cooked*, pp. 165 ff. The myths belong to tribes of the Ge linguistic group in Brazil.

[54] Ibid., pp. 184 f.

[55] Ibid., pp. 106 ff., 188 ff., 293.

[56] Ibid., pp. 169 f.

[57] The world tree par excellence is the Yggdrasil of the Edda. For the cosmic tree in general see, for instance, U. Holmberg, "Der Baum des Lebens," *Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia = Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Ser. B, 16, 3 (1922–23); M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions* (Paris, 1974), pp. 236 ff.; id., *Images and Symbols*, trans. P. Mairet (New York, 1969), pp. 44 ff., 161 ff.; and E. O. James, *The Tree of Life*, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to *Numen*), 11 (Leiden, 1966). Particularly important is the study of G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 4 (Uppsala, 1951), which investigates the relation on the one hand between the Tree of Life and the Water of Life and on the other between the Tree of Life and the sacral king, also between the Tree of Life and the Cosmic Tree (esp. p. 57). See finally E. A. S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (Berlin, 1970).

(Fig. 1).[58] In a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon according to the book of Daniel[59] — of which there is a particularly interesting medieval illustration in the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of St. Omer of 1120 (Fig. 2)[60] — the symbolisms of the Life-and-World Tree and of cosmic kingship are fused. Both the king and the tree flourished, but only as long as they could be identified with just rulership; when the ruler turned iniquitous, the tree was cut down and the stump bound with iron and brass so that its growth was stopped, and it was exposed to dew from heaven.[61] This recalls the life and death symbolism of the Tree of Life and the water around it in primitive South American myth. Yet I must add immediately that in the tree symbolism of the Book of Daniel polarity and ambivalence are at least in part overcome by a remnant of unity and by a reconciling peripatia: the tree is not completely destroyed, and it will germinate again from the roots, for the king will repent and will be reinstated.[62]

A resolution of duality into unity is characteristic of the tree symbolism of the Christian Middle Ages, the principal source of which was of course the Bible.[63] I am referring here above all to the relationship that was established

[58] E. A. Wallis Budge, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum: Reign of Ashur-Nasir-Pal, 885–860 B.C.* (London, 1914), Plate 9 and p. 6. See also E. B. Taylor, "The Winged Figures of the Assyrian and Other Ancient Monuments," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 12, 1889–1890 (1890), 383 f., who thought that such trees are date trees which are being artificially fertilized by the god or the king. Meanwhile, the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago,* 2 (1965), 79 f., s.v. *banduddû* c), and 10 (1977), 189, s.v. *mullilu,* seems to have established that a ritual of purification is represented (kindly brought to my attention by Prof. Erika Simon). Already Widengren, op. cit., pp. 8–19, had identified the royal lustrations and libations in which the king poured the revivifying Water of Life on the Tree of Life. Fig. 11 shows only the double image of the king, not of the winged god.

[59] Daniel 4.1–24.

[60] Ed. E. A. Derolez (Ghent, 1973), p. 464, from fol. 232 v of the manuscript in the University Library at Ghent. See also L. Delisle, "Notice sur les manuscrits du 'Liber Floridus' . . . ," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres bibliothèques* 38 (Paris, 1903), 708, no. 269.

[61] Cf. Daniel 4.11 f. and 21 f. for the prophet's identification of the dream tree with King Nebuchadnezzar. The exposure to the dew from heaven is listed with the other punishments, but can also ambivalently signify the grace of repentance; cf. P. B. R. Dobb, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children* (New Haven, London, 1974), p. 72. In the miniature of the *Liber Floridus* the Babylonian king lies dreaming at the foot of the tree, while another king of gigantic size is shown in the process of cutting the tree down with his sword. P. C. Mayo, "The Crusader under the Palm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), 29 ff., plausibly connects this figure and much else in the *Liber Floridus* with the presumed victory of a symbolic Judeo-Christian Jerusalem over a symbolic pagan-Moslem Babylon in the age of the First Crusade.

[62] Cf. Daniel 4.23 f. and 28–34.

[63] One of the best surveys of medieval tree symbolism is found in the study of D. W. Robertson, Jr., "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach through Symbolism and Allegory," SPECULUM 26 (1951), 24 ff. See also, for instance, J. Daniélou, S.J., *Primitive Christian Symbols,* trans. D. Attwater (London, 1964), pp. 25 ff.; M.-M. Davy, *Initiation à la symbolique romane (XIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1964), pp. 221 ff., 262 ff.; G. de Champeaux and S. Sterckx, O.S.B., *Introduction au monde des symboles* (Zodiaque, Introductions à la nuit des temps 3, 1966), pp. 271–373 (with many illustrations); and Dorothea Forstner, O.S.B., *Die Welt der christlichen Symbole,* 3rd ed. (Innsbruck, 1977), pp. 149 ff.

between the tree of Paradise and the Cross of Christ, which in fact comprises two tree symbolisms. One is that of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil;[64] this tree turns out to be an instrument of sin and death,[65] but according to the medieval Holy Cross Legend it later furnished the wood for the Cross of the Saviour.[66] The other symbolism is that of the paradisiac Tree of Life,[67] of which Lambert of St. Omer's *Liber Floridus* has likewise a good illustration (Fig. 3).[68] According to the book of Genesis it stood in the middle of Paradise,[69] in proximity to the paradisiac river (divided into four rivers)[70] that was to be interpreted later as the Fountain of Life by the Fathers of the Church and their successors among the writers and artists of the Middle Ages.[71] The Book of Revelation, too, speaks of a Tree of Life, one that arises on both sides of the Water of Life in the heavenly Jerusalem,[72] as seen, for instance, in a miniature of a thirteenth-century Apocalypse, MS R.16.2, Trinity College, Cambridge (Fig. 4).[73]

Ever since the early centuries of Church history the Tree of Life was identified both with the Cross and with the Crucified Christ, the true life. This identification was symbolic in a special way, already referred to, namely in the typological or figurative or allegorical sense of Holy Scripture, which looked at the events of the Old Testament as adumbrations of the New.[74] Thus the *Lignum vitae* of Paradise was the prototype or prefiguration of the Cross, the *Lignum vitae* of the new dispensation.

[64] Genesis 2.9; 2.17. There are innumerable representations of it in the medieval iconography of the Fall of Adam and Eve.

[65] Genesis 3.

[66] A. Mussafia, "Sulla leggenda del legno della Croce," *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philos.-histor. Classe 63, 1869 (Vienna, 1870), pp. 213 ff; W. Meyer, "Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus," *Abhandlungen der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philos.-philol. Classe, 16, 2 (Munich, 1882), pp. 101 ff. For further literature see my article "Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance," *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York, 1961), pp. 309–311, notes 26, 32, 35 f.

[67] In addition to the studies of Holmberg and James, mentioned in note 57, see F. Piper, "Der Baum des Lebens," *Evangelischer Kalender* 14 (1863), 17 ff.; A. Wünsche, *Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Lebenswasser* (Leipzig, 1905); R. Bauerreiss, O.S.B., *Arbor Vitae* (Munich, 1938); and the lexicon articles by A. Jacoby, "Kreuzbaum," *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* 5 (1933), pp. 487 ff., by L. Stauch, "Baum in der christlichen Symbolik," *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* 2 (1948), pp. 63 ff., and by H. Bethe, "Baumkreuz," ibid., pp. 100 ff., "Astkreuz," ibid., 1 (1937), pp. 1152 ff.

[68] Ed. Derolez (n. 60 above), p. 105, from fol. 52r of the Ghent manuscript.

[69] Genesis 2.9.

[70] Genesis 2.10.

[71] Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions* (n. 57 above), pp. 169 ff., 251 f.; W. Molsdorf, *Christliche Symbolik der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1926; repr. Graz, 1968), pp. 196 ff.; P.A. Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950), 80 ff.

[72] Apocalypse 22.1.

[73] In the miniature the *fluvius aquae vitae splendidus tanquam crystallum* of Apoc. 22.1 is only barely visible between the brownish river banks.

[74] See above, p. 226.

We may recall here for a moment the importance of the linguistic contrast between metaphor and metonymy. Obviously the *Lignum vitae* of Paradise is not a metaphor of the Cross and neither is the Cross a metaphor of a paradisiac tree. The relationship is a metonymical one, one of conceptual contiguity, mutual participation, and temporal — diachronic — sequence. The *Lignum vitae* aspect of the Cross is part of the metahistorical and historical economy of salvation, which has its beginning in the *felix culpa* that occurred in Paradise and will end in redemption. Thus, in spite of the polarity between fall and redemption, and beyond all similarity between tree and cross, we have here a relationship of unification and hierarchical order under the sign of the Cross.

Many medieval works of art illustrate the symbolic interpretation of the Cross and of Christ Crucified as the Tree of Life. I shall adduce three examples:

First, an ampulla from Bobbio, of the sixth or early seventh century, where palm leaves — symbols of victory — sprout from the wood of the Cross (Fig. 5).[75]

Second, the twelfth-century apsis mosaic of San Clemente in Rome, where the Cross of Christ forms the center of an enormous and beautifully executed acanthus scroll, which according to the inscription of the mosaic symbolizes a vine. The Christological symbolism of the vine is here combined with that of the dry and the green tree, for the inscription implies that the Tree of Life of Paradise, which the transgression of God's law had made dry, was made green again by the Cross (Fig. 6).[76]

Third, Pacino di Bonaguida's early-fourteenth-century panel in the Accademia of Florence,[77] the iconography of which is derived from St. Bonaventure's treatise *Lignum vitae* (Fig. 7).[78] The Christ-bearing tree is here the Tree of Life of the Apocalypse, with its twelve branches, which were conceived by Bonaventure, and depicted in medallion form by Pacino, as three times sixteen phases of Christ's salvific action: the forty-eight medallions are organized according to the mysteries of the origin, Passion, and glorifica-

[75] Cf. A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza-Bobbio)* (Paris, 1958), p. 32, Plate 32.

[76] Cf. G. Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali delle Chiese di Roma* . . . (Rome, 1967), pp. 279–304, Figs. 228 and 230; L. Boyle. O.P., *A Short Guide to St. Clement's, Rome* (Rome, 1972), pp. 26 ff. Matthiae's suggestion that in the mosaic's inscription, "Ecclesiam Christi viti simulabimus isti / Quam lex arentem set crus [*sic*] facit esse virentem," the word *lex* does not signify the law of the Old Testament, but Roman law, is in my opinion not any more acceptable than the idea of E. Scaccia-Scarafoni (rightly rejected by Matthiae), "Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente in Roma," *Bollettino d'Arte* 29 (1935–36), 49 ff., where the author wanted to identify *lex* with Canon law and to date the mosaic in the thirteenth century. Both authors disregard the Holy Cross legend and the symbolism of the dry-and-green tree; cf. my paper cited in note 66.

[77] R. Offner, *Corpus of Florentine Painting*, Section 3, vol. 2, part 1 (New York, 1930), Plates 2 ff., and vol. 6 (1956), Plate 62b. For other illustrations of Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*, see now *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, 1 (Grottaferrata, 1972), pp. 17 ff.: "Iconographia Bonaventuriana in Italia," especially 30–35; see also my article, referred to in note 66, 312 f., n. 43, with further literature.

[78] S. Bonaventura, *Opera Omnia*, 8 (Quaracchi, 1898), pp. 68 ff.

tion of Christ.[79] At the very bottom of the panel the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise are also represented, and man's potential immortality, lost but to be regained, is intimated by showing the Fountain of Life (cf. below) and the Four Rivers of Paradise (Genesis 2.10) in the midst of these expulsion scenes (Fig. 8).

In these examples the life and death connotations of the tree symbol, which in primitive myth had been mere polarities, are unified anagogically through Christ's Cross, the true *Lignum vitae*, which is also seen as a cosmic cross, as a new world-supporting and unifying tree.[80]

It is appropriate at this point to remark briefly on the psychoanalytic interpretation of a strange transformation of Christian tree symbolism in one of Freud's most famous case histories, that of the so-called wolf-man.[81] This patient, when he was a little boy, had had a frightful and significant dream in the night before Christmas: his presents were hanging on the Christmas tree, but suddenly in his dream the window opened and he saw instead of the Christmas tree the big walnut tree that stood just outside his window, and on it there sat about half a dozen white wolves silently looking at him and terrifying him. The wolf-man added a drawing of the tree and the wolves to his description of the tree (Fig. 9). The tree is bare and dry.[82] It contrasts therefore with the green Christmas tree (Fig. 10), which in spite of its relatively late appearance in the Christmas festivities seems at least in part to have developed out of the symbolisms of the paradisiac Tree of Knowledge and the World and Life Tree.[83] The dream of the wolf-man constituted a parallel — unnoticed by Freud as well as by his patient — to the age-old antithetical symbolism of the dry and the green tree, which appears in many medieval and modern works of art. I mention only a late-fourteenth-century manuscript of Deguilville's *Pélerinage de l'âme*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS français 823, where in a miniature (fol. 133v) Justice with sword drawn stands between the dried-up tree of guilt and the tree of life, which harbors Mary, the guarantor of redemption; further Piero della Francesca's panel of the Resurrection in Borgo San Sepolcro, where Christ rises from death between the dry and the green tree.[84]

[79] Ibid., p. 68, Prologue: "Et quoniam imaginatio iuvat intelligentiam, ideo quae ex multis pauca collegi in imaginaria quadam arbore sic ordinavi atque disposui, ut in prima et infima ramorum ipsius expansione Salvatoris origo describatur et vita, in media passio, et glorificatio in suprema." See also the title of the chapters, on p. 70 of the same edition.

[80] Cf. my article, cited in note 40, "St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Augustine on the Symbolism of the Cross."

[81] Cf. S. Freud, *The Case of the Wolf-Man: From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 17, pp. 7–122), reedited in *The Wolf-Man by the Wolf-Man* by Muriel Gardner together with the memoirs of the Wolf-Man himself (Basic Books, New York, 1971), pp. 153–262.

[82] Fig. 9 is taken from p. 174 of the Basic Books edition of Freud's *The Case of the Wolf-Man.*

[83] A. Tille, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Weihnacht* (Leipzig, 1893), especially pp. 256 ff.; A. Jacoby, "Zum Weihnachtsbaum," *Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde* 27–1928 (1929), 134 ff.; C. A. Skriver, *Der Weihnachtsbaum* (Munich, 1966), especially pp. 132 ff.

[84] These and other examples are illustrated and discussed in my article, cited in note 66,

It is not necessary for our purpose to enter upon the complicated relation of the tree-and-wolf symbolism to a traumatic experience of very early childhood, uncovered by Freud in his analysis of the wolf-man, that resulted in a neurosis centered in fear-love of his father. Suffice it to say that psychoanalysis has defined a world of symbols which does not consist only of consciously construed signs, but also of modes of indirect — one might almost say, of metaphorical or allegorical — representation of unconscious ideas, conflicts or wishes.[85] What is important in our context is that in the case of the wolf-man, who was brought up in the Russian orthodox faith — and no doubt in many other cases, too — neurosis can among other things activate or recreate and then secularize a religious or at least sacred antinomy, in this instance that between the good and the bad tree.[86]

Let us turn now from the ambivalence of tree symbolism to the related and likewise ambivalent symbolism of water, and consider especially the sacrament of baptism. Baptism, through identification of the neophyte with Christ, was and is seen as both a death and a resurrection. It is the new Fountain of Life, related in typological correspondence to the sacred waters of old.[87] In the pavement mosaic of the early Christian Baptistery of Oued

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"Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance," pp. 311 f. For Guillaume de Deguilville, see also Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (n. 21 above), pp. 145–218. See also Hélène Toubert, "Une fresque de San Pedro de Sorpe (Catalogne) et le thème iconographique de l'*Arbor Bona-Ecclesia, Arbor Mala-Synagoga,*" *Cahiers archéologiques, Fin de l'antiquité et moyen âge* 19 (1969), 167–189.

[85] Cf. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1973), p. 442, kindly brought to my attention by Prof. Peter Loewenberg. That the tree symbol can have phallic significance is a commomplace of mythology and psychoanalysis, but does not seem to have a direct bearing on the subject matter of this paper. For male-female tree symbolism cf. C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series 20 (Princeton, 1967), pp. 221 f., 423–425.

[86] It is not necessary in my opinion to assume here the emergence of Jungian archetypal images (see also Freud's methodological remark at the end of his study of this case, op. cit., pp. 261 f.). Though the dream occurred when the patient was only 4 years old, the retelling of it and the accompanying drawing belong to the time of his young manhood and it seems entirely possible that he had either heard of Christian dry and green tree lore or else had reinvented it for himself by making a comparison between the winterly walnut tree and the Christmas tree. It is also significant that at the end of his second period of psychoanalytic treatment — by Ruth Mack Brunswick — he had a reassuring dream of a beautiful tree with intertwined, presumably summerly branches and without wolves; see R. M. Brunswick, in *The Wolf-Man*, Basic Books Edition, p. 291. I have further to thank Dr. Peter Loewenberg for his reference to an article by A. J. Lubin, "The Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on Freud's Wolf-Man: A Hypothesis," *The Psychoanalytic Forum* 2 (1967), 146 ff., in which he suggests that the five-branched tree with five wolves symbolizes the so-called Russian Cross and the crucified Christ with His five wounds; the hypothesis does not convince me.

[87] For the water (or fountain) of life and its relation to the tree of life and the rivers of Paradise as well as to regenerative, especially baptismal, symbolism see Eliade, *Traité* (n. 57 above), pp. 169–172, 251 f., Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri* (n. 19 above), pp. 13 ff., Molsdorf, *Christliche Symbolik* (n. 71 above), pp. 196 ff.; the old but still useful study by E. W. Hopkins, "The Fountain of Youth," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 26 (1905), 1 ff.; the article by Robertson, cited above (n. 63); and the study by Widengren, cited above (n. 57).

Ramel in North Africa (Fig. 11), for example, and in the Carolingian Gospel Book of Saint-Médard of Soissons (Fig. 12),[88] the baptismal font is equated with the fountains of water for which, according to Psalm 42.2 f., the hart pants as the soul pants for God. The Four Rivers that issue from the River of Paradise (Genesis 2.10) and the Cross and Tree of Life symbolism are also present in these images.

A great patristic scholar, the late Cardinal Daniélou, called typology — that allegorical correspondence between the two testaments — the *Sacramentum Futuri*, sacrament being here understood in the sense of *mysterium*;[89] the mysterious, the mystical, is the "super-symbolic," it is an experience of unification in the strongest sense of the term. And indeed, in Christian understanding, Old Testament symbolism through its prophetic character prefigured the mysterious and unifying sacramental symbolism of the Christian dispensation.[90] To use linguistic terminology once again, this is not so much a metaphorical as a metonymical symbolism, for sacramental symbolism is not merely one of similarity, but rather one of contact, of participation of man with Christ, in Christ.[91] The sacrament is altogether a very special kind of symbol: it not only signifies, but also effects what it signifies, and in the case of the Eucharist even is what it signifies, namely Christ in His sacrifice and the Church's sacrifice to Him in response.

We have moved rather far away from primitive symbolism of water and tree and are confronted with different structures. It is evident that a structuralism of the Lévi-Straussian kind, in order to embrace the symbolism of the so-called higher cultures, including that of the Middle Ages, would have to enlarge its scope. Lévi-Strauss for that matter has renounced any such ambition on his part.[92] However, others — for instance, Jean Piaget and Paul

[88] Both are discussed and illustrated in Paul A. Underwood, "Fountain of Life" (n. 71 above) 41 ff., especially 136 f., Fig. 75, and 67 ff., Figs. 26 and 29.

[89] Cf. Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri*, as cited in note 19.

[90] Cf. J. de Ghellinck, S.J., and others, *Pour l'histoire du mot "Sacramentum,"* 1, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Fasc. 3 (Louvain, Paris, 1924), especially ch. 2, section 2: "Sacramentum-ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ," pp. 170 ff., and also p. 311.

[91] Cf. G. Söhngen, *Symbol und Wirklichkeit im Kultmysterium*, 2nd ed. (Bonn, 1940), especially pp. 47 f., 55 ff. Catholic theology after a millenial process of defining the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist came to call it a "reality-symbol" (*Realsymbol*) in a special sense; cf. *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, 1 (Munich, 1962), pp. 350 f. (article "Eucharistie" by J. Betz). For participation in Catholic theology, see also H. Weisweiler, S.J., "Sakrament als Symbol und Teilhabe: Der Einfluss des Ps.-Dionysius auf die allgemeine Sakramentenlehre Hugos von St. Viktor," *Scholastik* 27 (1952), 321 ff.; Söhngen, "Thomas von Aquin über Teilhabe durch Berührung," in *Die Einheit in der Theologie* (Munich, 1952), pp. 107 ff.; and H. R. Schlette, article "Teilhabe II," *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, 2 (Munich, 1963), pp. 634–641, with bibliography.

[92] Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, "Réponses à quelques questions," *Esprit*, Nouvelle Série, 31 (1963), 629 ff., especially 631–633. Meanwhile Marcel Detienne has made an interesting move in this direction, with regard to certain aspects of Greek mythology. See his *Les jardins d'Adonis: La mythologie des aromates en Grèce* (Paris, 1972); cf. Lévi-Strauss's largely approving review in *L'Homme* 12 (1972), 97–102, and the rather disapproving one by G. S. Kirk, "The Spicy Side of Structuralism," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 August 1978, p. 922 f. I am grateful to Dr. Luke Wenger for drawing Detienne's book and the two reviews to my attention.

Ricoeur — have already moved in a direction where participation, transformation, and unification have equal standing with mere similarity and opposition.[93]

I can only touch upon these great problems and cannot pursue them. Instead, I should like to discuss certain pictorial and diagrammatic tree schemata of the Middle Ages that represent various aspects of a universe seen as classified and graded. Among such schemata, trees of consanguinity and of affinity have a character of their own and are of special interest. I shall first discuss consanguinity trees,[94] which are more instructive in our context

[93] Cf. J. Piaget, *Structuralism*, trans. C. Maschler (New York, 1970), especially pp. 10 ff. and 140 ff. on transformation (construction of structures), 81 ff. on N. Chomsky's transformational structuralism in linguistics, and 116 on participation. As to P. Ricoeur, in his criticism of Lévi-Strauss, he twice stressed the participatory notion of sacrifice, which the latter considers devoid of good sense, because it presupposes the intervention of "a non-existent term, divinity" (*The Savage Mind*, p. 228); cf. Ricoeur, "Structure et herméneutique," *Esprit*, Nouvelle Série, 31 (1963), pp. 623 f., note 1, also "Symbolique et temporalité," *Ermeneutica e Tradizione, Archivio di Filosofia* 1963, p. 28, note 7. As early as 1898 Hubert and Mauss had stressed the importance of sacrifice in cosmogonic and cosmological mythology and theology and in the systems of ethics related to them; see H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice*, trans. W. D. Halls (London, 1964), especially pp. 92 f. M. van Esbroeck, in a very ingenious book, *Herméneutique, structuralisme et exégèse* (Paris, 1968) — in which he compares the thought of Ricoeur, Lévi-Strauss, and de Lubac — has shown (pp. 183 and 198 f.) how closely sacrifice is connected, especially in a Christian context, with the metonymic (participatory) aspect of symbolism, an aspect which in Christianity culminates in the participation of the Church in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

[94] There are a considerable number of scattered studies of these trees and their illustrations in works of genealogy and legal history, and also occasional mention by art historians, but no thorough treatment, except for the very valuable, unpublished Tübingen dissertation by Hermann Schadt, "Die Darstellungen der Arbores Consanguinitatis bis zum 4. Laterankonzil 1215," which was kindly drawn to my attention by Professor Stephan Kuttner, after much of this section of the paper had been written. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Schadt, who through the kind mediation of Professor Heiko Oberman in Tübingen generously sent me a copy of the manuscript and illustrations of the first two parts of his dissertation — which is now in the press — and thus enabled me to obtain better knowledge and understanding of the extremely complex historical development of consanguinity *stemmata* and related tree schemata, particularly with regard to the so-called presentation figure. My friend Stephan Kuttner had even earlier lent me a copy of the third part of Dr. Schadt's thesis, and I have to thank Professor Kuttner also for Figures 15–18, made from microfilms at the Institute for Medieval Canon Law in the Law School of the University of California, Berkeley. I am also grateful to my former student, Dr. Phillip Stump, now Assistant at the Institute for Medieval Canon Law at Berkeley, for bibliographical and research assistance concerning manuscripts of consanguinity trees and genealogical trees. In addition to Schadt's dissertation and his study "Zum Verwandtschaftsbild und der Weltalterlehre des Sachsenspiegels," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1976), pp. 406 ff., see O. Lorenz, *Lehrbuch der gesammten wissenschaftlichen Genealogie* (Berlin, 1898), especially Part 1, chapter 2, pp. 88 ff.: "Die Stammtafel in formaler Beziehung"; R. Stintzing, *Geschichte der populären Literatur des römisch-kanonischen Rechts* . . . (Leipzig, 1867; repr. Aalen, 1959), pp. 149 ff. and 43; M. Conrat, *Geschichte der Quellen und Literatur des römischen Rechts* (Leipzig, 1891; repr. Aalen, 1963), pp. 316 ff. and 631 ff.; Conrat, "Arbor iuris des früheren Mittelalters mit eigenartiger Komputation," *Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1909, Philosophisch-Historische Classe, Abh. 2 (Berlin, 1909). A. Melnikas, *The Corpus of the Miniatures in the Manuscripts of Decretum Gratiani*, 3, Studia Gratiana 18 (Rome, 1975), p. 1109, note 2, promises a study on the iconography of the *arbores*. While this article was in the press, S. Kuttner

than affinity trees, and then some examples of the great variety of more general tree schemata that flourished from the twelfth century onward.

Many illuminated manuscripts of the *Decretum* of Gratian and of other canonistic works contain consanguinity trees. In a Bolognese manuscript of the Decretals of Gregory IX (and Novels of Innocent IV and Gregory X) of the first half of the fourteenth century, Pal. lat. 629 in the Vatican Library (Fig. 13), the picture of a consanguinity tree accompanies the versified treatise on the *Arbor de consanguinitate* by Johannes de Deo, who flourished around the middle of the thirteenth century.[95] But what sort of tree is this? The place of the tree trunk is taken up by a venerable bearded man, who in this picture wears a bishop's mitre, but in many other manuscript illustrations of canonistic consanguinity trees has a crown on his head or is bareheaded. The ancestors, to great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother, which one might expect to form the root and lower part of the tree — as the ancestors of Christ do in the well-known iconography of the Tree of Jesse (cf. below) — are here at the top, and the progeny, to great-great-grandson and great-great-granddaughter, are at the bottom. This conforms to the concepts of descent and ancestry, but it contradicts the idea of a tree, except if one thinks of an age-old symbolism which sees the macrocosmus or in some instances only microcosmic man as inverted trees which have their roots in heaven. This kind of tree and plant symbolism occurred in many widely separated places and at different times — in ancient India and among the Icelanders, Finns, and Lapps, in Plato's *Timaeus* (90A. f.), in the *Zohar* (Beha 'Alothekha), in Muslim speculation, and in certain followers of Dante[96] — but there is hardly a connection to consanguinity trees, which are ultimately derived from the geometric diagrams that were used to illustrate

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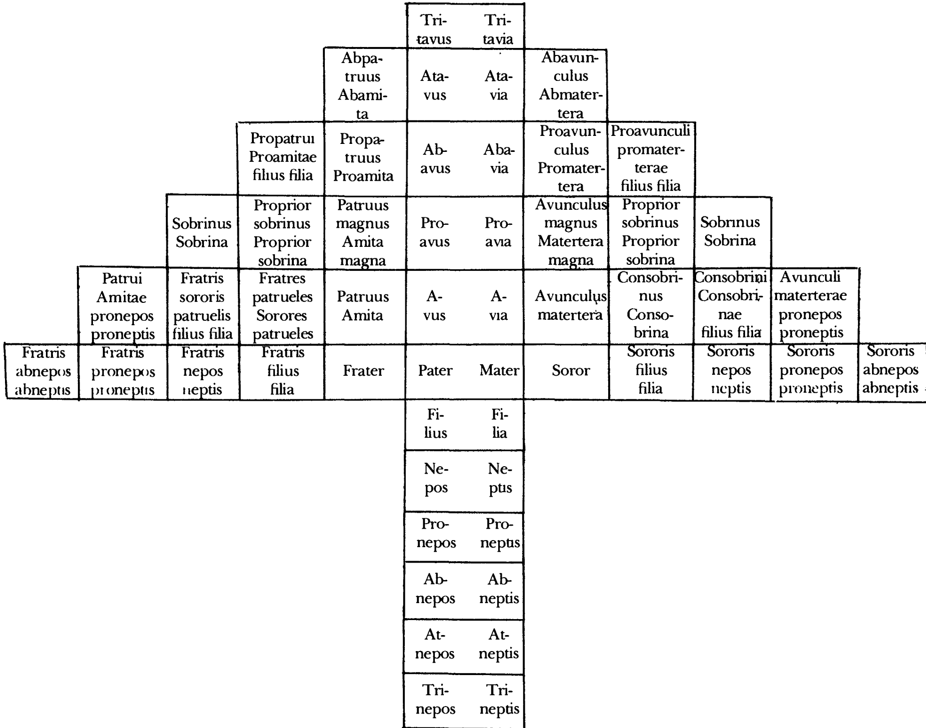
drew my attention to the erudite study by E. Volterra, "La 'Graduum agnationis vetustissima descriptio' segnalata da Cujas," *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei* 375, Memorie, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Ser. 8, vol. 22, Fasc. 1 (Rome, 1978). Though Volterra's study has no direct bearing on the subject matter of this paper, it should be noted that it refers quite extensively not only to the archaic Roman consanguinity *stemma,* first made known to modern jurisprudence by Cujacius, but also to many other medieval schemata of consanguinity found in Roman or canon law manuscripts (see esp. pp. 45–54).

[95] F. C. v. Savigny, *Geschichte des römischen Rechts im Mittelalter* (Heidelberg, 1829), pp. 427 f.; also António Domingués de Sousa Costa, *Un mestre Portuguès em Bolonha no seculo XIII, João de Deus* (Braga, 1957), pp. 65–68, on the *Arbor versificata* (brought to my attention by Dr. Phillip Stump). Johannes Andreae (d. 1348) in his commentary to the *Arbor consanguinitatis* (cf. the edition of E. Friedberg, *Corpus Iuris Canonici* 1 [Leipzig, 1876], pp. 1429 ff., and Friedberg's remark ibid., pp. 1277–1278, note 228), which was inserted in manuscripts and old editions of the *Decretum Gratiani* (after Causa 35, quaest. 5) and of the *Decretales*, mentions Johannes de Deo's treatise and its obscurity.

[96] I have briefly discussed the symbolism of the inverted tree in my article "Vegetation Symbolism" (cited in note 66), pp. 309 f., note 30. See in addition Eliade, *Traité*, pp. 237–238; H. de Lubac, *Aspects of Buddhism*, trans. G. Lamb (London and New York, 1953), p. 65; Holmberg, "Baum des Lebens" (cited in note 57), pp. 54 f., also pp. 16 f.; and R. Cook, *L'arbre de vie: Image du cosmos*, trans. J. Brethes (Paris, 1975), pp. 18–20.



family relations according to Roman law. Such diagrams are found in medieval manuscripts of the *Breviarium Alarici* (the Roman law code used in Visigothic Spain)[97] and the *Notitia dignitatum,*[98] further in manuscripts of the *Institutiones* of Justinian[99] and the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville,[100] who called these diagrams *stemmata,* a term used in a genealogical sense at least since the first century A.D.[101]

The diagram reproduced above illustrates the consanguinity *stemma* of the *Institutiones,* as reconstructed by the nineteenth-century Italian jurist Patetta.[102] Such diagrams consisted of geometric figures in which the family

[97] *Lex Romana Visigothorum,* ed. G. Haenel (Leipzig, 1844; repr. Aalen, 1962), pp. 408 f.: *Pauli Sentent.* IV, tit. X, *De gradibus*; *stemmata* at the end of the edition.

[98] See H. Omont, *Notitia Dignitatum Imperii Romani: Reproduction reduite des 105 miniatures du manuscrit 9661 de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris* (Paris, [1911?]); these consanguinity trees were first drawn to my attention by my friend Carl Nordenfalk.

[99] Cf. *Instit.* III, tit. VI, *De gradibus cognationum.*

[100] Cf. Isidore, *Etymolog.*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 1 (Oxford, 1911), 9.5 and 9.6: *De affinitatibus et gradibus* and *De agnatis et cognatis*; *stemmata* at the end of tit. 6.

[101] Isidore, *Etymol.* 9.6.28. Cf. Persius, *Sat.* 3.28; Seneca, *Epist.* 44.1; Suetonius, *Nero* 37, *Galba* 2.

[102] F. Patetta, "Nota sopra alcuni mss. delle Istituzioni di Giustiniano," *Bullettino dell' Istituto di Diritto Romano* 4, 1891 (1892), 56 (reprinted in Patetta's *Studi sulle fonti giuridiche medievali* [Turin, 1967], p. 80); this reconstruction is based on a twelfth-century manuscript of the *Institutiones,*

relationships were inscribed. Originally they were not trees in the vegetative sense, but tables the shape of which could be reminiscent of the shape of a tree with its branches. Isidore of Seville was perhaps the first to use the tree terms "trunk" and "branches," *stirps* and *ramusculi*, in this connection.[103]

In many manuscripts and printed editions a central human figure "presents" the *stemma* of consanguinity to the reader. It is one of the great merits of the thesis of Hermann Schadt (see n. 94 above) to have clarified the evolution of this so-called presentation figure in the manuscript traditions of Roman and canon law and of Isidore's *Etymologiae*. From the rich manuscript material analyzed by Schadt, I take only a few facts and examples.

Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, MS. Ashburnham 1560. That the *Institutiones* were provided with a diagrammatic representation of the degrees of consanguinity is explicitly stated in *Instit.* III, VI, 9. A consanguinity *stemma* very similar to that of Florence, Bibl. Laurenz., MS Ashburnham 1560, is contained in the tenth-century MS lat. 12448, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, of the *Lex Romana canonice compta*; see M. Conrat, *Geschichte* (n. 94 above) p. 631, the *stemma* on p. 634 f. Other *stemmata* derived from the *Institutiones* were found in manuscripts of its Greek paraphrase by C. Ferrini; see his *Opere*, 1 (Milan, 1929), 225 ff. Likewise similar is one of the *stemmata* found in certain manuscripts of the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, i.e., of the *Breviarium Alarici*, Forma IV in Haenel's edition. However, for the sake of completeness it is necessary to mention that there is also a variant of this *stemma*. This is Forma II in Haenel's edition of the *Breviarium*; it occurs also in a related *stemma* of Isidore's *Etymologiae* (9.6.28, ed. Lindsay). For reasons to be given presently, we may call this the Paulus type, after the Roman jurist of c. 200, and the *stemma* in Patetta's Florentine manuscript of the *Institutiones* may be called the Justinian type. The difference between the two types consists chiefly in the lack of mention of the *Frater* and *Soror* of the *stemma*'s subject in the Paulus type. In the Justinian type they are assigned the second grade of consanguinity and have their position beside *Pater* and *Mater*, whereas in the Paulus type this position and this grade belong to *Patruus-Amita* and *Avunculus-Matertera*, who in the Justinian type are found a line higher, beside *Avus* and *Avia*, and are given the third grade of consanguinity. The consanguinity diagrams of Patetta's Florentine Codex of the *Institutiones* and of Conrat's Parisian Codex of the *Lex Romana canonice compta* — in other words the Justinian type — in all probability represent the original *stemma* of the *Institutiones*, for in the text (III, VI) it is indeed *Frater* and *Soror* and not *Patruus* and *Amita*, *Avunculus* and *Matertera*, who occur in the second grade (§2), whereas the latter four relations follow in the third (§3). On the other hand, that arrangement and gradation of consanguinity relationship which I called the Paulus-type, has nothing to do with Justinian's *Institutiones*, but seems to be derived from the *Interpretatio* of the so-called *Sentences of Paulus*, to IV, Tit. X, sent. 2, as incorporated in the *Breviarium*, ed. Haenel 408 (corresponding to *Sent. Iul. Paul.* IV, 11, 2, in the edition of J. Furlani, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antijustiniani*, 2 [Florence, 1940], 381). There the *Frater* is identified with the father's or mother's brother rather than with the brother of the *stemma*'s subject, and this indeed corresponds to *stemma* II in certain manuscripts of the *Breviarium* (according to Haenel's edition) and to *Stemma* II of Isidore's *Etymologiae* 9.6.28 (in Lindsay's edition). Another *stemma* of the same type in Cod. Vat. lat. 1352 of the Vatican Library (saec. XI), fol. 62, has been published by M. Conrat, "Arbor iuris" (cited in note 94); Conrat, too, for different reasons derives this *stemma* from the *Sententiae Pauli* and assigns to it provenance and date in Spain between the sixth and eighth centuries (op. cit., pp. 37 ff.). It is possible that diagrammatic consanguinity *stemmata* were a part of the *Breviarium* and also of the *Notitia Dignitatum* from the beginning.

[103] Cf. Isidore, *Etymol.* 9.5.13 and 9.6.28, ed. Lindsay. The Ghent manuscript of the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer of 1120 has on fol. 102v a consanguinity tree which clearly shows the transition from geometric diagram to tree; in a second image, on fol. 103r, which has only the descendents, the tree is purely vegetative, though here, too, "father" and "mother" are inscribed on the top branches, and the descendents on the lower ones.

In surviving known manuscripts the presentation figure first occurs in tenth-century Spanish exemplars of the *Etymologiae* — e.g. Madrid, Real Academia de Historia, MS 76, fol. 73v[104] and MS 25, fol. 146r — and in a famous manuscript of the Hispana in the Escorial, d. 12, fol. 15r, the Codex Vigilanus of 976.[105] In surviving manuscripts of the *Institutiones*, the presentation figure appears quite late, around 1200, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS d'Orville 94, fol. 35v.[106] Here the figure wears a crown and imperial dress. The same holds true for a group of manuscripts of the *Decretum Gratiani*, in some of which the imperial presentation figure clearly "byzantinizes" in costume, insignia, and style, most explicitly in Beaune, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 5, of c. 1200, fol. 288v (Fig. 14).[107] Though in the majority of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Gratian manuscripts the ruler of the consanguinity *stemma* does appear more Romanesque than Byzantine in iconography and style — for instance, in Cod. Rossianus 595 of the Vatican Library, likewise of c. 1200, fol. 2v (Fig. 15)[108] — it is very possible that Schadt is correct in assuming that the imperial presentation figure is ultimately derived from a late ancient or early Byzantine prototype (perhaps in a contemporary manuscript of the *Breviarium Alarici* or Justinian's *Institutiones*). The imperial figure may signify Justinian or Theodosius II, whose Code, which has no discussion of consanguinity and no *stemma*, forms the core of the *Breviarium* together with the *Sententiae Pauli*, which has a chapter on consanguinity. Or it may simply represent the ideal ruler.[109] In view of the many other Roman law elements that are to be found in the *Corpus iuris canonici*, it would not be particularly surprising if a traditional imperial figure had been carried along in the manuscripts of the *Decretum Gratiani* and of canonistic literature in general once it had been introduced into the *Decretum*.

And yet, the main purpose of consanguinity schemata was different in canon law and Roman law. In Roman law they served to establish the degrees of family relationship in order to define the right to inherit, whereas canon law in taking over and modifying these tables aimed at graphically

[104] Reproduction in Schadt's "Verwandtschaftsbild" (n. 94 above), Fig. 44.

[105] G. Antolín, *Catálogo de los códices latinos de la Real Biblioteca del Escorial* (Madrid, 1910), pp. 368 ff.; A. Millares Carlo, *Manuscritos visigóticos*, in *Hispania Sacra* 14 (1961), pp. 18 f.; and G. Martinez Diez, S.J., *La Colleccion Canonica Hispana* (Madrid, 1966), pp. 114 ff.

[106] Cf. O. Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, 2 (Oxford, 1970), Nr. 72, Pl. 7.

[107] Mentioned in Dr. Schadt's dissertation (n. 94 above), to Fig. 175; for the reproduction here shown, after a microfilm at the Institute for Medieval Canon Law in Berkeley, I have to thank Professor Stephan Kuttner.

[108] I owe knowledge of this manuscript and the photograph again to Professor Kuttner and also to the assistance of Dr. Phillip Stump.

[109] Cf. Cod. Vat. lat. 1352 (saec. XI), fol. 62, where according to Conrat, "Arbor iuris," (cited in note 94), p. 15, the author of the consanguinity tree is simply called Augustus. However, in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 4412 (saec. IX ex.), fol. 77r, the consanguinity tree is accompanied by drawings of the jurist Gaius and of a seated figure, designated "ego sum Theodosius rex," obviously referring to the author of the *Codex Theodosianus*, the emperor Theodosius II (*rex* may be a retranslation from the Greek emperor title *basileus*).

representing those degrees of blood relationship which prohibited marriage, at least without ecclesiastical dispensation. This was a matter of direct and vital interest to family lineage and at the same time to the Church's control of the propagation of the human race.

From this latter point of view, it is perfectly understandable that in not a few twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts of the *Decretum Gratiani* one finds instead of the emperor an Adam-like figure, for instance, in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 10, fol. 330 (of c. 1200).[110] In some manuscripts this figure seems to be assimilated to Christ, for instance in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 3887, fol. 199v (saec. 12 ex.),[111] and in Vatican Library, Pal. lat. 625, fol. 252v (c. 1200; Fig. 16).[112] This type of presentation figure is sometimes adorned with a halo, but I know of only one example of a cross nimbus: Cambridge, St. John's College, H 11 (saec. 12 ex.), a manuscript of Isidore's *Etymologiae*.[113] An Adamic figure had occurred already in manuscripts of Burchard of Worms's *Decretum*, for instance, in Cod. Vat. lat. 4880, fol. 92r (saec. 12 in.; Fig. 17),[114] and even earlier in the canonistic collection, Cod. Vat. lat. 1339, fol. 303v (saec. 11 in.).[115] The Isidorian and canonistic manuscripts of tenth-century Spain, mentioned above (p. 245), belong in the same context.

At least in ecclesiastical milieus, then, Adam iconography of the presentation figure appeared before the imperial one. On the other hand, the consanguinity tree of Pal. lat. 629 (Fig. 13) shows that in the later Middle Ages all earlier forms of the presentation figure could be replaced by a pontiff. This may be an expression of the increasingly hegemonic, if not hierocratic, role of the *sacerdotium* in the later Middle Ages.

It is clear that in all variants of the consanguinity *stemma* the tree schematism is of a highly metaphorical and merely analogical nature, and this in two respects: first, the tree grows from the top down rather than from the bottom up; second, the presentation figure — in the guises of emperor, first or second Adam, and pontiff — constitutes the main part of the tree, so that the connotations of organic growth, inherent in tree symbolism, are eclipsed by those of authority and power, whose symbolic function here is the setting of limits to inheriting or to endogamic unions, in Roman and canon law, respectively.

The subject of trees of consanguinity raises another question, namely that of the severity of the medieval consanguinity rules themselves, which on the surface seems to contradict the bent toward participation and unity which is of

[110] See Rosy Schilling, "The *Decretum Gratiani*, Formerly in the C.W. Dyson Perrin Collection," *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, ser. 3, vol. 26 (1963), 32 and 36.

[111] Cf. Schadt, dissertation (n. 94 above), to Fig. 203.

[112] Again I owe information on the manuscript and the photograph for Fig. 16 to Professor Kuttner and to Dr. Stump.

[113] Cf. Schadt, dissertation (n. 94 above), to Fig. 104 (62). There is no doubt that Christ is here meant, also because two swords issue from His mouth; cf. Apoc. 19.15 (Vulgate).

[114] Information and photograph as in note 112.

[115] Cf. Schadt, "Verwandtschaftsbild" (cited in note 94), p. 418, Fig. 45.

such great importance in medieval symbolism. What practical or symbolic reasons induced the medieval Church to adapt the Roman law of inheritance, which extended to the sixth and in part even the seventh degree of consanguinity, to the law of marriage; and why subsequently, between the eleventh and early thirteenth centuries, did the Church limit marriage between relatives even more strictly by adopting the Germanic computation of degrees? In the central part of the Middle Ages the new "canonical" computation could lead to a doubling of the prohibited degrees of consanguinity in marriage law, as compared with the Roman *stemmata* of blood relationship.[116]

No satisfactory explanation has, as far as I can see, ever been given. Isidore of Seville's linking of six degrees of consanguinity to the six ages of the world and of man[117] was no doubt an afterthought, which was however perpetuated and modified by later authors.[118] Unreflective taking over of Roman and Germanic ideas and practices can likewise not suffice as an explanation, nor does the code of Leviticus,[119] which deals more with sex in general among relatives than with marriage and in any case ranges much less widely or is less definite.[120]

Assertions of genetic damages and dangers — a highly dubious matter — did play a certain role.[121] More importantly, we can observe during the Middle Ages a very noticeable horror of any sexual relationship including marriage that even remotely could suggest incest — and we must remember that the term is derived from *in-castus*, unchaste. From a social point of view this meant a rather extreme form of exogamy; it contrasted at first with a tendency toward endogamy that was strong in early medieval feudal society, since it kept the patrimony in the same family and thus could contribute to the maintenance of the family's wealth and power. Here again the anthropological models of Lévi-Strauss can be useful for comparison, in conjunction with the studies of Georges Duby on marriage in the Middle Ages.

Lévi-Strauss's *Structures elementaires de la parenté* have not remained uncontested by anthropologists. Nevertheless, he has I think shown that exogamy as a far-reaching exchange of women was carried out among many primitive peoples in a manner which may be considered symbolic: not only as a symbol

[116] For all this see the lucid summary by A. Esmein, *Le mariage en droit canonique*, 1 (Paris, 1891), pp. 341 ff. See also C. E. Smith, *Papal Enforcement of Some Medieval Marriage Laws* (Louisiana State University Press, 1940); general histories of canon law, especially E. Loening, *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, 2 (Strassburg, 1878), 553–556; and *Dictionnaire de droit canonique* 4: 232 ff.

[117] Cf. *Etymol* 9.6.29.

[118] Cf. the letter of Pope Alexander II in Gratian's *Decretum* c. 2, C. 35, qu. 5, §9, ed. E. Friedberg (n. 95 avove) 1:1274.

[119] Cf. Leviticus 18.6 ff.

[120] Though Esmein, op. cit., seems to consider such explanations sufficient.

[121] They were based chiefly on Gregory the Great's *Responsum* to Augustine of Canterbury, *Gregorii I Papae Registrum·Epistolarum* 11, 56a, 5, MGH Epist. 2 (Berlin, 1899), p. 335, which was received in the *Decretum Gratiani*, c. 20, C. 35, qu. 2–3. Lévi-Strauss, *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (see the following note), p. 15, therefore is not correct when he says that fear of degenerative effects of incest evoked no echo before the nineteenth century.

of rejection of real or imagined incest, but even more as a symbol for the willingness of different tribes to communicate with one another. His view that in the elementary rules of marriage even endogamy presupposes exogamy, and that the former can only limit or suspend the dominance of the latter, seems to me to be supported by the evidence. Lévi-Strauss compares exogamy to language: and indeed exogamy and the primitive rules of marriage in general are in one sense the equivalent of linguistic signs, though in another sense they are not.[122] Lévi-Strauss himself makes it clear that, while women in primitive societies can be signs or symbols par excellence for the evolving relationships between social and ethnic groups, relations which were based on communication, the same women were also persons and values in their own right.[123]

Viewed in this light, the development toward greater strictness in medieval consanguinity law may in fact illustrate the concern for unity that we have found elsewhere in medieval symbolism. The increased restrictions on marriage between family members were part of the well-known efforts of the Gregorian Church reform to purify and regularize the sexual life of Christian society in general. That this was not considered merely a negative task may be deduced from documents of the age. Thus St. Peter Damian considers marriage as a means to repair charity, which has a tendency to cool or vanish in society at large, that is to say, outside the area of blood relationships.[124] And St. Ivo of Chartres[125] quotes a most telling text from St. Augustine's *City of God*, which was then taken over by Gratian.[126] It is the very first text of Causa 35 of Gratian's *Decretum*; it deals with incestuous, that is to say, consanguineous marriages, and it states clearly that marriage outside the family group is desirable because it is conducive to the spreading

[122] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, 2nd ed. (Paris, etc., 1967), pp. 565 f.: ". . . si la prohibition de l'inceste et l'exogamie ont une fonction essentiellement positive, si leur raison d'être est d'établir, entre les hommes, un lien sans lequel ils ne pourraient s'élever audessus d'une organisation biologique pour atteindre une organisation sociale, alors il faut reconnaître que linguistes et sociologues n'appliquent pas seulement les mêmes methodes, mais qu'ils s'attachent a l'étude du meme objet. De ce point de vue, en effet, 'exogamie et langage ont la même fonction fondamentale: la communication avec autrui, et l'intégration du groupe' (quotation from W. I. Thomas, *Primitive Behavior* [New York, London, 1937], pp. 182 f.). . . . Car la prohibition de l'inceste n'est pas une prohibition comme les autres; elle est *la prohibition* sous sa forme la plus générale. . . . La prohibition est universelle comme le langage. . . ." P. 566: ". . . les relations entre les sexes . . . conçues comme une des modalités d'une grande 'fonction de communication'. . . ." For endogamy and exogamy according to Lévi-Strauss, see the chapter on this subject in his *Structures élémentaires de la parenté*.

[123] Ibid., p. 569: "A l'invers du mot, devenu intégralement signe, la femme est donc restée, en même temps que signe, valeur."

[124] Petrus Damiani, *De gradibus parentelae* c. 3, PL 145:194: "Verumtamen cum affinitas generis elongata discedit, humanae pravitatis vitio quasi submoto fomite amoris, flamma frigescit. Ad reparandum ergo mutuae charitatis igniculum accurrunt subinde foedera nuptiarum. . . . Ubi autem manus consanguinitatis, quae captum a se trahebat, deficit, illico matrimonii uncus, quo fugiens evocetur, occurrit."

[125] Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum* 8.39, PL 161:592; id., *Panormia* 7.52, PL 161:1291–1293.

[126] Gratian, *Decretum* c. 1, C. 35, qu. 1.

Figure 1. ASHURNASIRPAL AND THE SACRED TREE
London, British Museum (after Wallis Budge)

Figure 2. Liber Floridus: Nebuchadnezzar's Tree
Ghent, University Library (after Derolez)

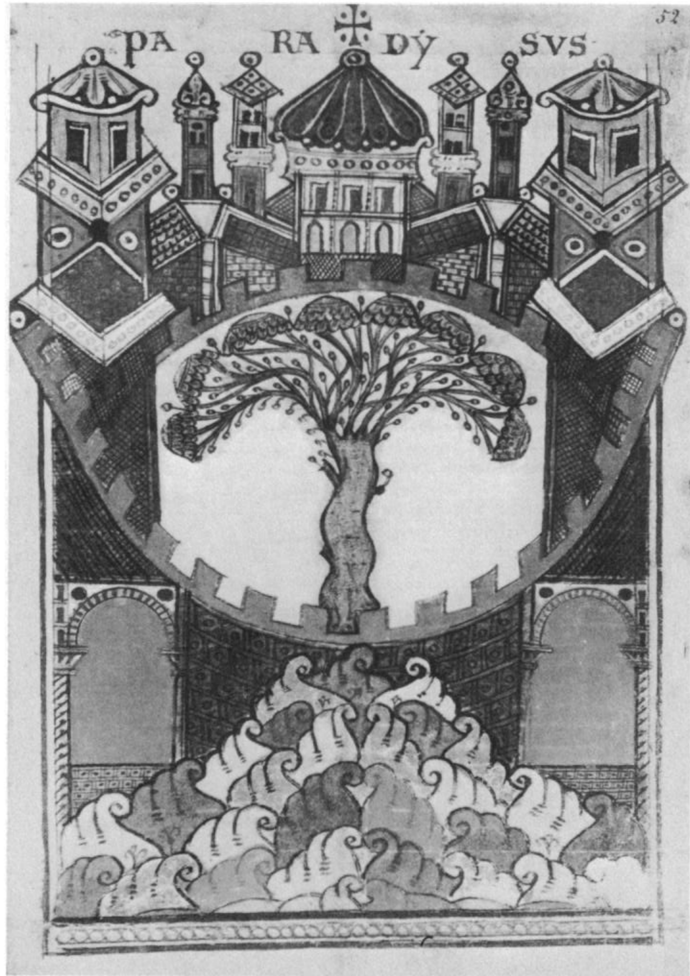


Figure 3. Liber Floridus: Tree of Life
Ghent, University Library (after Derolez)

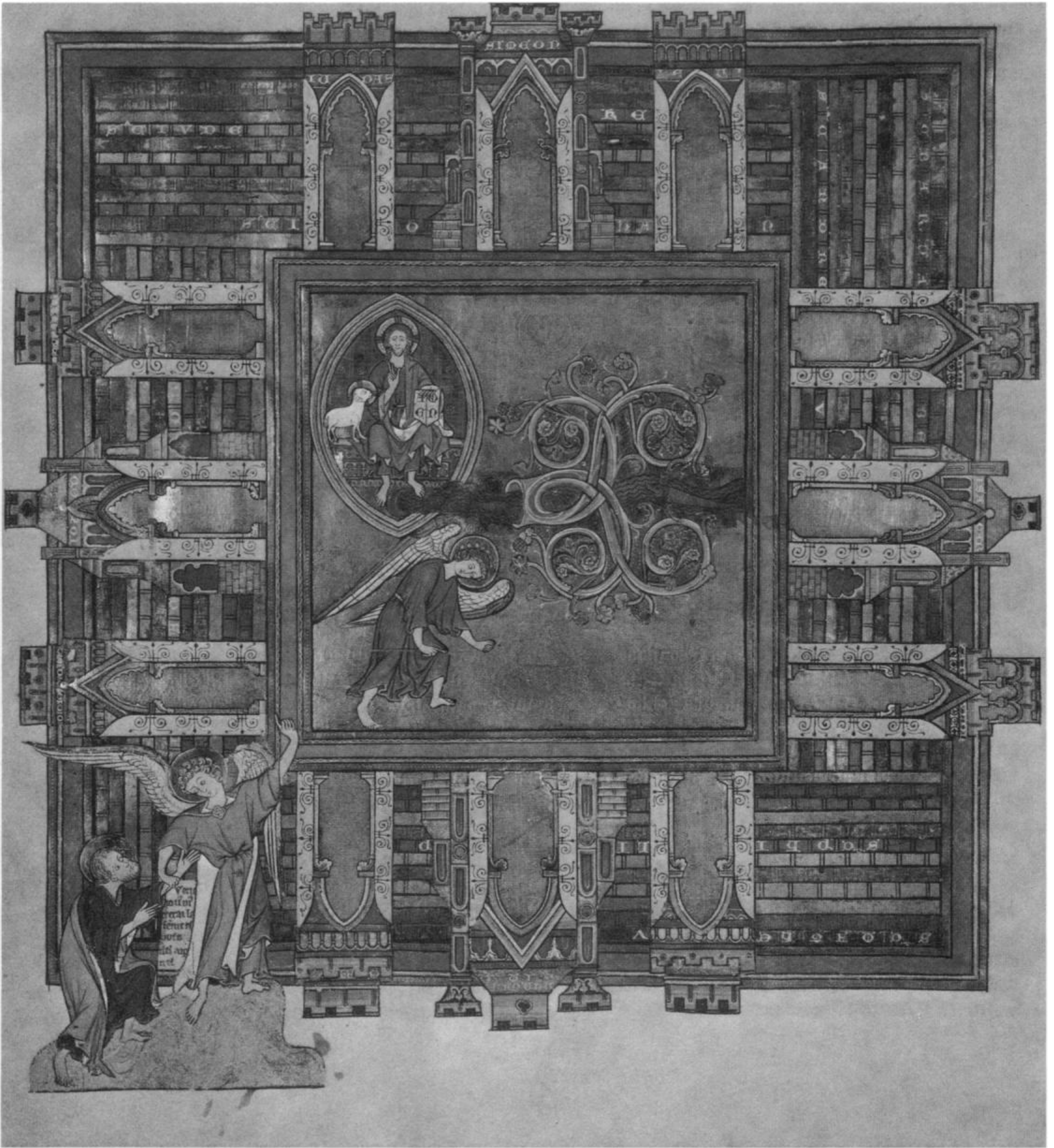


Figure 4. Apocalypse: Tree of Life
Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.16.2 (after Cook, *Arbre de vie*)

Figure 5. Cross as Tree of Life
Bobbio, Ampulla (after Grabar)

Figure 6. Apsis Mosaic (detail):
Christ on the Cross and Vine Symbol
Rome, S. Clemente (after Boyle)

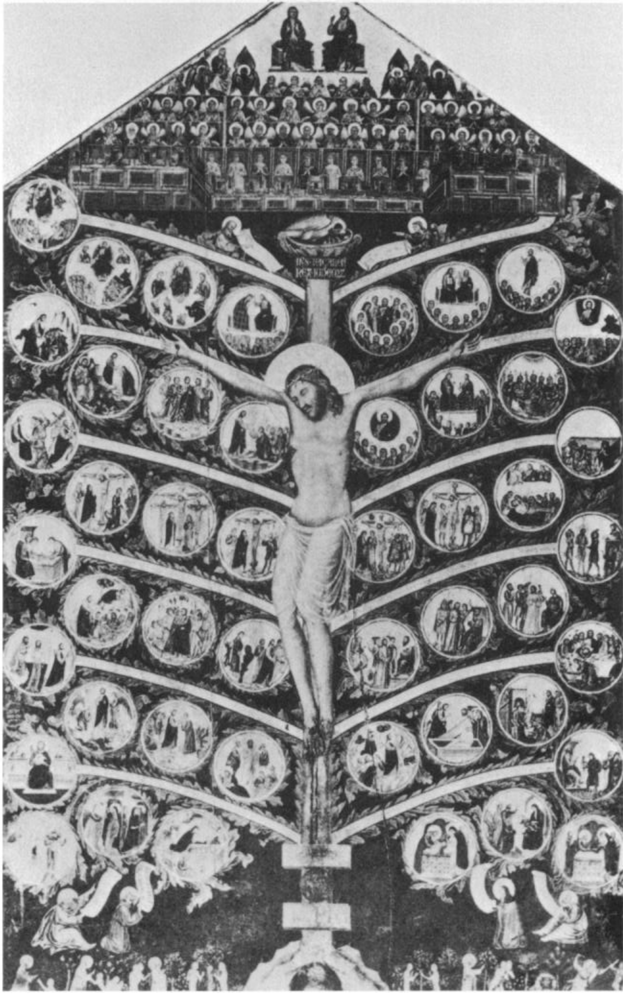


Figure 7. PACINO DI BONAGUIDA, LIGNUM VITAE PANEL
Florence, Accademia (after Offner)

Figure 8. PACINO DI BONAGUIDA, LIGNUM VITAE PANEL (detail):
EXPULSION FROM PARADISE
Florence, Accademia (after Offner)

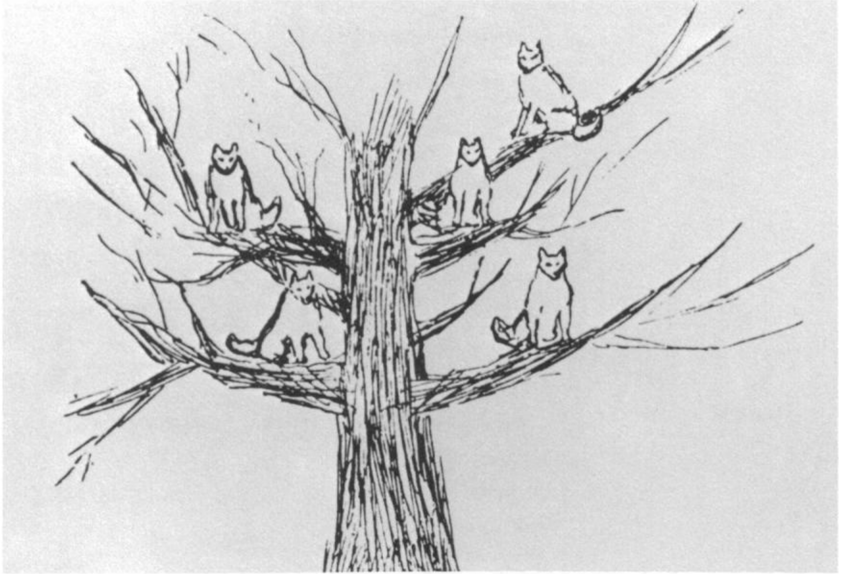


Figure 9. THE WOLF-MAN'S TREE
(after Gardiner)

Figure 10. QUEEN VICTORIA AND PRINCE ALBERT'S CHRISTMAS TREE
(after Skriver)

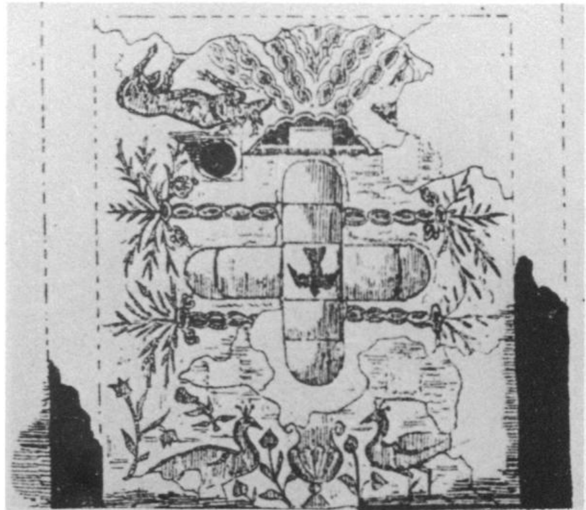


Figure 11. PAVEMENT MOSAIC (detail): FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
Oued Ramel, Baptistery (after Underwood)

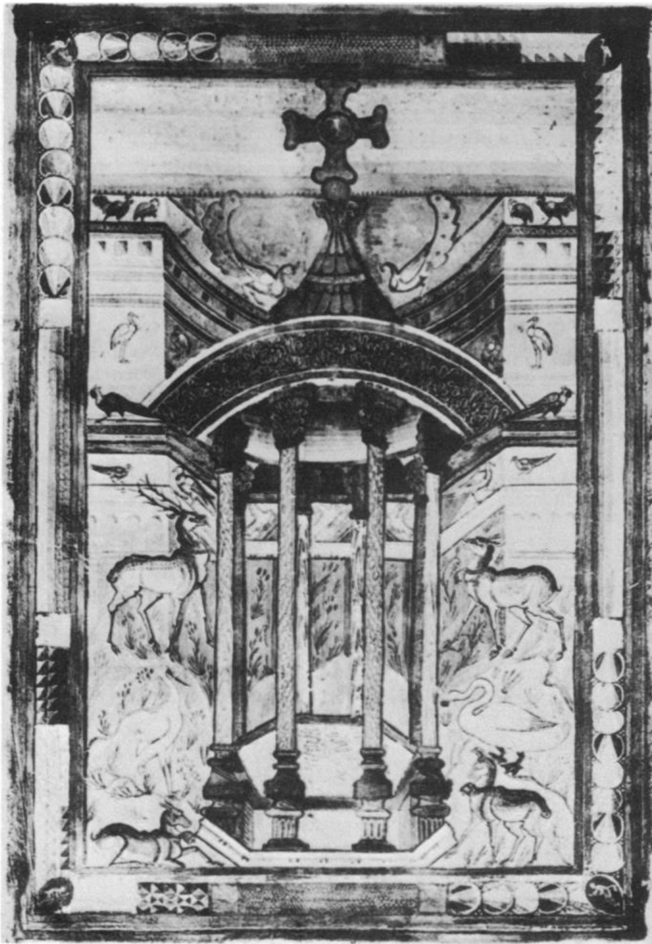


Figure 12. GOSPEL BOOK OF SAINT-MÉDARD OF SOISSONS: FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (after Underwood)

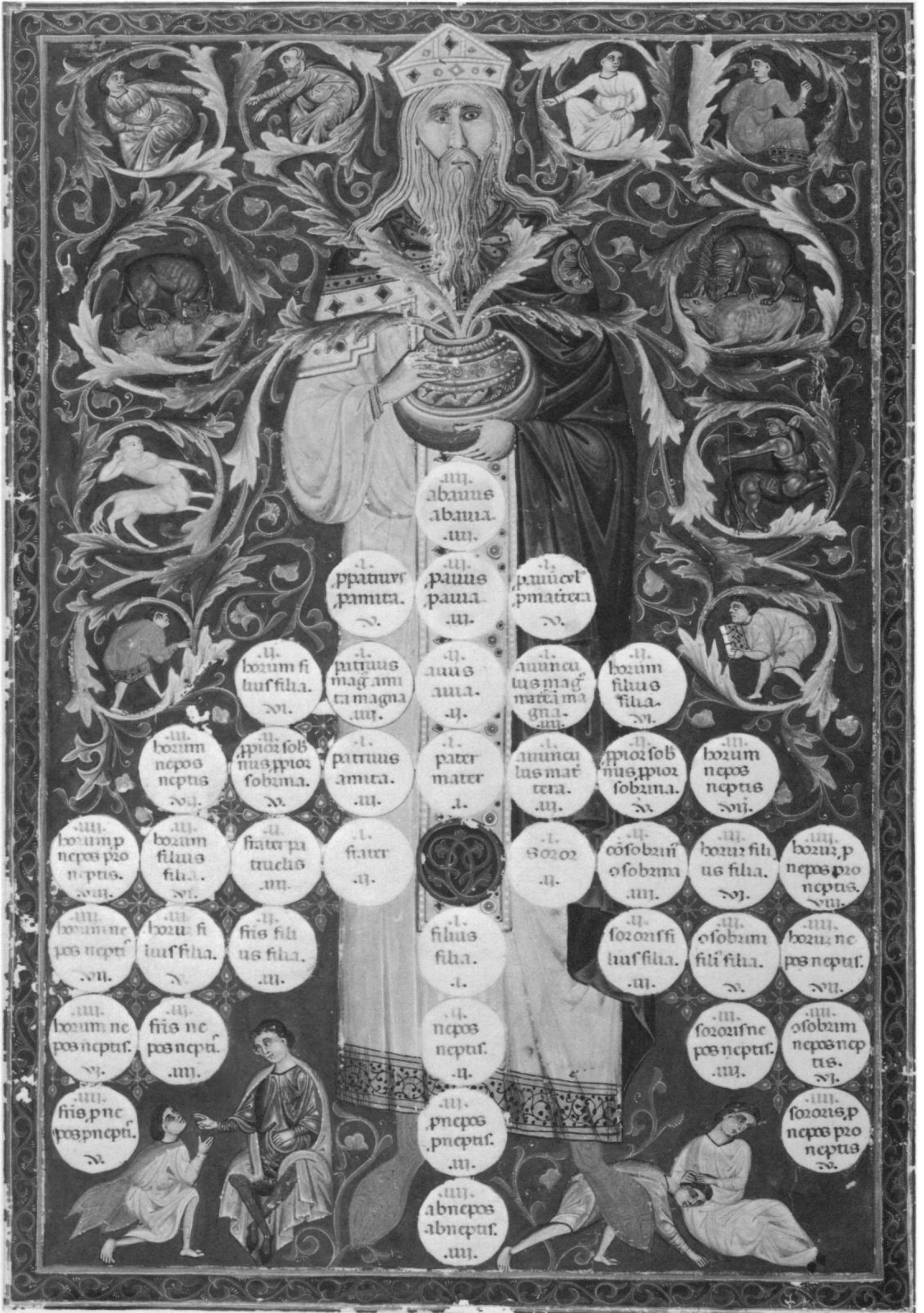


Figure 13. Decretals of Gregory IX: Consanguinity Tree
Biblioteca Vaticana Cod. Pal. lat. 629 (photo Vatican Library)

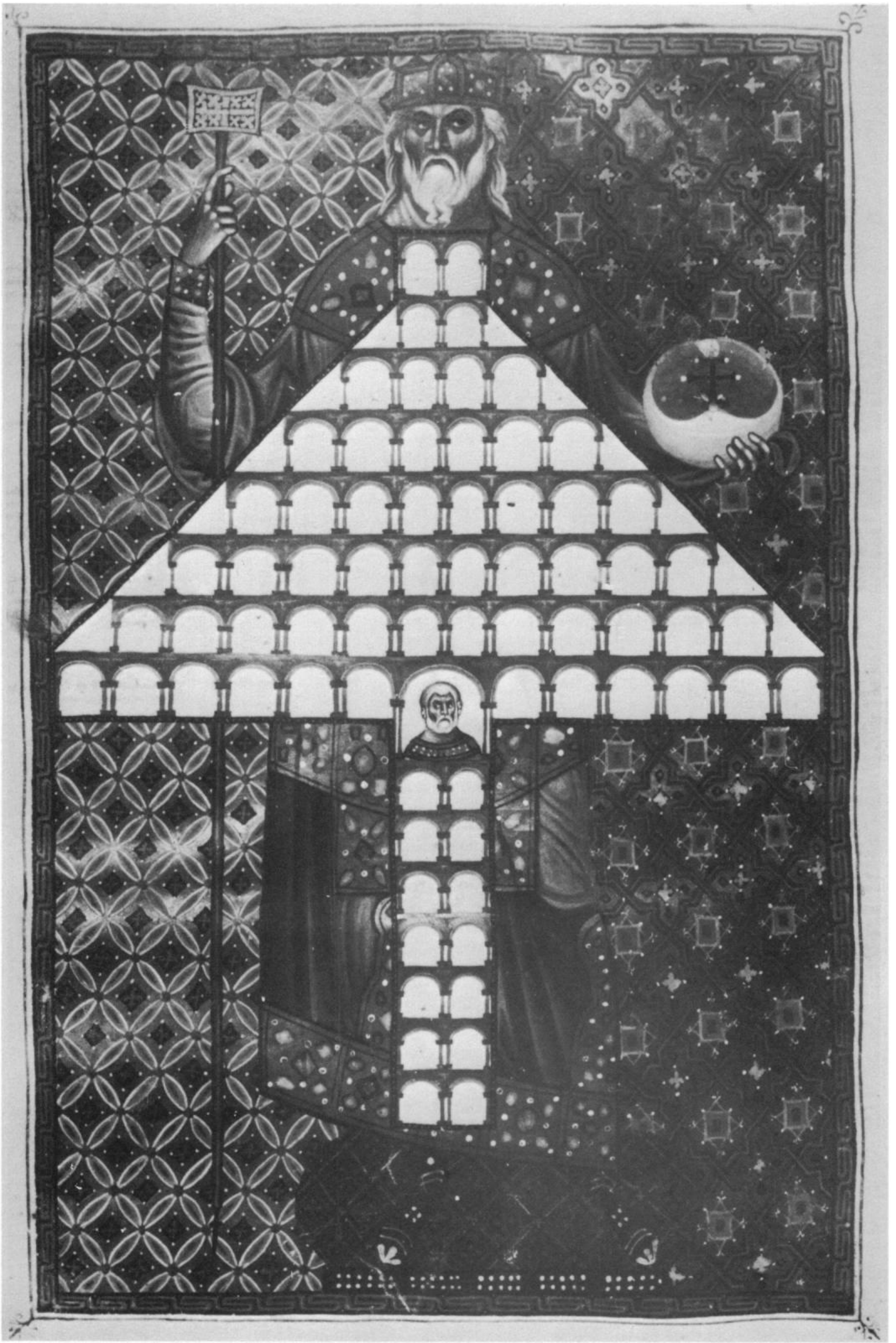


Figure 14. DECRETUM GRATIANI: CONSANGUINITY TREE
Beaune, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 5 (photo Institute of Medieval Canon Law, Berkeley)

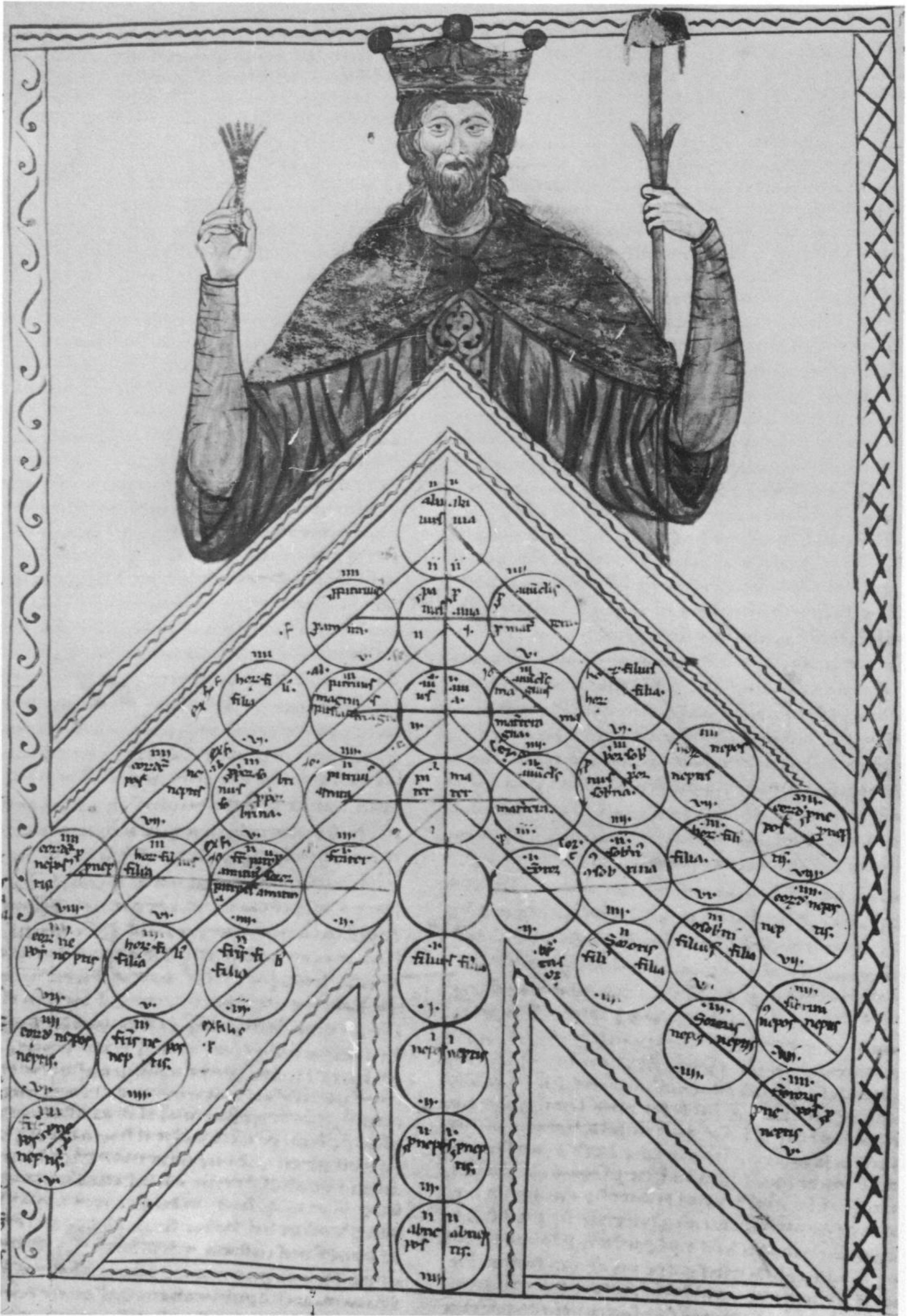


Figure 15. DECRETUM GRATIANI: CONSANGUINITY TREE
Biblioteca Vaticana Cod. Rossianus 595 (photo Institute of Medieval Canon Law, Berkeley)

Figure 16. DECRETUM GRATIANI: CONSANGUINITY TREE
Biblioteca Vaticana Cod. Pal. lat. 625 (photo Institute of Medieval Canon Law, Berkeley)

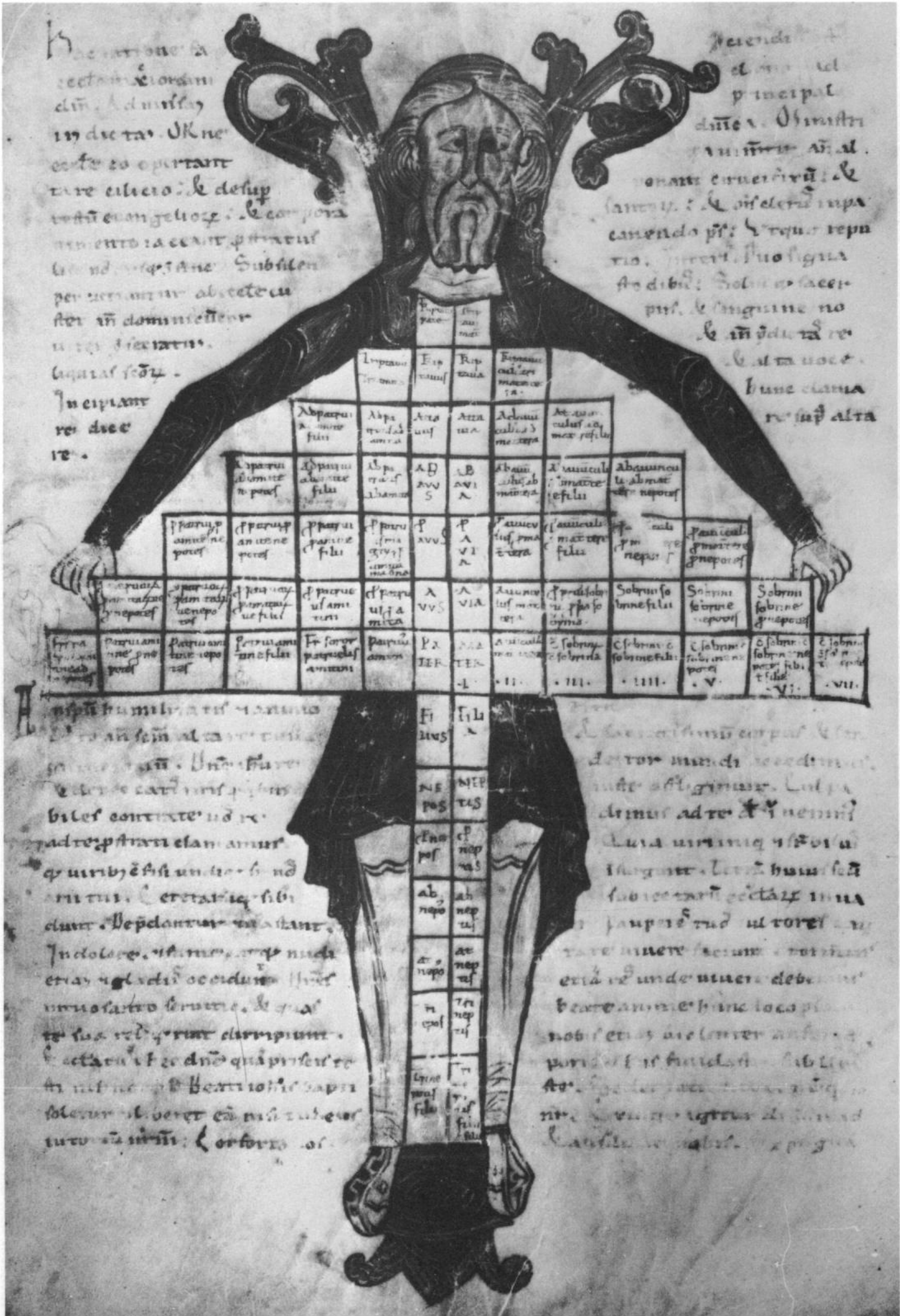


Figure 17. DECRETUM OF BURCHARD OF WORMS: CONSANGUINITY TREE
Biblioteca Vaticana Cod. Vat. lat. 4880 (photo Institute of Medieval Canon Law, Berkeley)

Figure 18. Winchester Psalter: Tree of Jesse
British Library MS Nero C.IV (after Cook, *Arbre de vie*)

Figure 19. FRUTOLF-ECKEHARD, WORLD CHRONICLE: CAROLINGIAN FAMILY TREE
Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek MS 406 (after *Catalogue*, University Library, Erlangen, vol. 6)

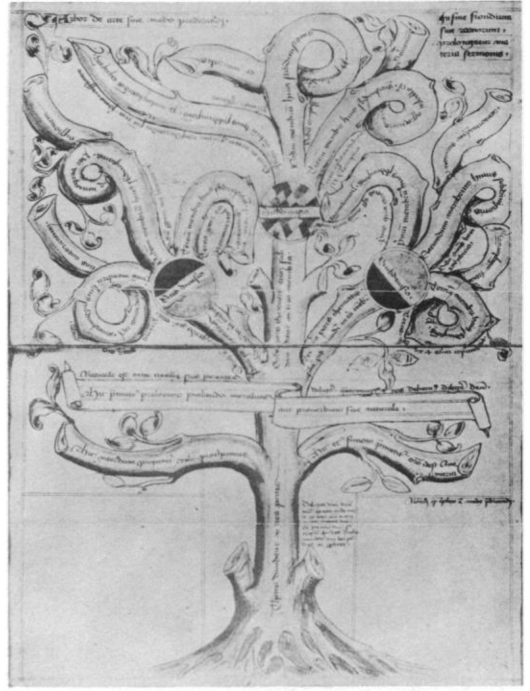


Figure 20. TREE OF PREACHING
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 23865 (after Charland)

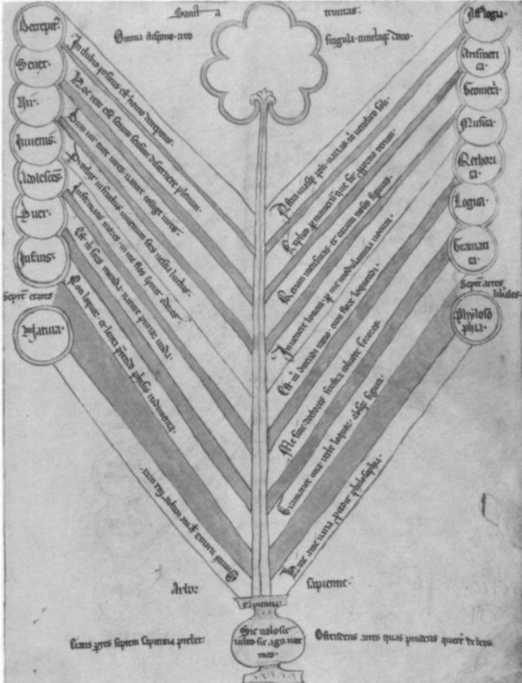


Figure 21. TREE OF WISDOM
New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS 416 (courtesy The Beinecke Library)

Figure 22. RAMON LULL, ARBRE DE FILOSOFIA D'AMOR: TREE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE
Palma de Majorca, Collegi de la Sapiencia (after Rubio)

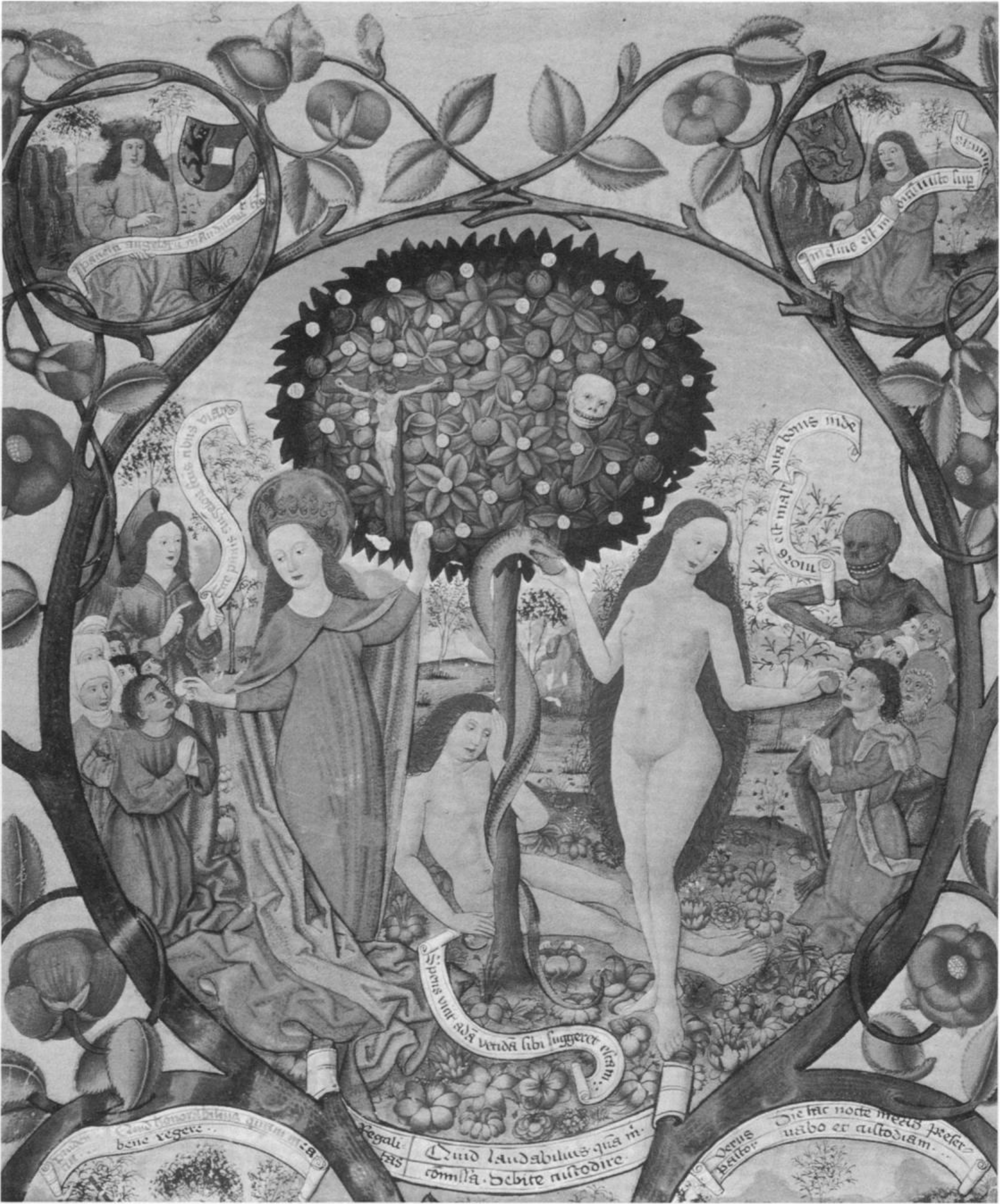


Figure 23. Missal of Archbishop Bernhard von Rohr of Salzburg, Miniature by Berthold Furtmeyr: Tree of Knowledge and of Life Combined
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 15710 (after Cook, *Arbre de vie*)

Figure 24. Gauguin, Whence Do We Come . . . What Are We . . . Whither Are We Going?
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

of love among many more human beings.[127] Medieval canonists and theologians could then see their rules of consanguinity as unifying rather than divisive. These rules therefore were probably not a symbolic expression of a distrustful and restrictive attitude on sexual matters, but at least in part of an effort to extend marital love all through Christian society, and certainly beyond the confines of family clanishness.[128] Concomitantly, the sacramental character of marriage finally prevailed.

Also, as Georges Duby has shown, from the twelfth century onward at the latest, the feudal aristocracy, and especially its higher sector, strove toward the consolidation of hereditary lineage. This led not only to the prevalence of primogeniture inheritance, but also to the increased importance of marriage itself as a means to solidify social position. These aspirations led beyond endogamy toward marital alliances with other and if possible with greater houses.[129] At the same time, since the middle of the century, the mutual consent of the spouses and the indissolubility of the sacrament of matrimony became the paramount interest of the Church in matters of marriage.[130] This again resulted in an increasing number of dispensations from the strict laws of consanguinity and probably also contributed to the mitigation of the laws themselves, to the reduction of the impediment of consanguinity from the seventh to the fourth canonical degree by Pope Innocent III.[131]

Whereas consanguinity trees — and even consanguinity rules them-

[127] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 15.16 (as quoted by Gratian, ed. Friedberg, 1:1262): ". . . Habita enim est ratio certissima karitatis, ut homines, quibus esset utilis atque honestissima concordia, diversarum necessitudinum vinculis necterentur, nec unus in uno multas haberet, sed singulae spargerentur in singulos ac sic ad socialem vitam diligentius plurimae plurimos obtinerent. Pater quippe et socer duarum sunt necessitatum nomina. Dum ergo quis alium habet patrem, alium socerum, numerosius se karitas porrigit. . . . Copulatio igitur maris et feminae, quantum attinet ad genus humanum, quoddam seminarium est karitatis. . . ."

[128] See the interesting explanation of family incest taboos and exogamy given by G. P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York, 1949), p. 299: they are institutions which "curb sexual rivalries and jealousy within the family . . . the kindred, lineage, sib, extended family, clan or community. The unity or social solidarity of these groups is thereby enhanced. . . . Moreover out-marriage makes possible the establishment of friendly relations between groups and helps to bind them together in larger political units. . . . Finally, intermarriage and the resulting peaceful relations between groups foster the reciprocal borrowing of culture traits. . . ."

[129] See G. Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. E. Forster (Baltimore, London, 1978), pp. 8–12. I am very grateful to Professor Duby for allowing me to see the French manuscript of this book before publication and to Professor John W. Baldwin and the Johns Hopkins University Press for making it available to me. Cf. also Duby, "Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XIe et XIIe siècles," in *Hommes et structures du moyen âge* (Paris, La Haye, 1973), pp. 267 ff. For the earlier, endogamic, phase of marriage policy, see Duby, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 8; also idem, "Le mariage dans la société du haut moyen âge," in *Il matrimonio nella società altomedievale*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 24, 1 (Spoleto, 1977), p. 22.

[130] Cf. Duby, *Medieval Marriage*, pp. 64–81.

[131] Cf. *Concilium Lateranense IV* (1215), 50.

selves — belong to the classificatory and metaphorical aspects of symbolism[132] and, therefore, have attachments to the taxonomical interests of modern anthropological and linguistic structuralism,[133] the tree symbolism now to be discussed has a different character. It brings us back once more to those aspects of medieval symbolism in which metonymical participation and exemplarism play a decisive role.

It is characteristic of *schemata* of this kind that — contrary to consanguinity trees — the tree symbol is used to represent organic growth from root to top rather than artificial ramification from top to bottom.[134] The purpose here is pictorialization of natural continuity and mutual participation between the elements of the design rather than of discontinuities and exclusion of relationships. Perhaps the oldest iconographic form of this new approach to symbolic tree schematism is the Tree of Jesse,[135] probably an invention of the eleventh century and in the mid-twelfth century illustrated by famous examples of stained glass at St.-Denis and Chartres and in such illuminated manuscripts as Bishop Henry of Winchester's Psalter in the British Library, MS Nero C. IV, fol. 9r (Fig. 18). The Tree of Jesse is a symbolic representation of the origin of Jesus from Jesse — through his son King David and through Mary — according to the prophecy of Isaiah.[136] This is obviously much more than a metaphor based on likeness; rather it is a part-part relationship of representation, of participation between Christ's ancestors and Christ Himself. There is metonymical contiguity, that is to say, real

[132] This holds true also for the so-called *Arbores Porphyrianae,* which in medieval logical works illustrate the conceptual system of Porphyry's *Isagoge,* extending downward from universal to particular. Even though surviving illustrations belong only to the high and late Middle Ages, they may go back to late ancient models, since Boethius in his Commentary to Porphyry's work explicitly mentions a *descriptio* placed *sub oculis* (PL 64:103).

[133] Significantly, Lévi-Strauss's *Structures élèmentaires de la parenté,* is dedicated to the memory of Lewis H. Morgan, the author of one of the most universal classificatory studies in anthropology: *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family,* Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge 218 (Washington, D.C., 1870). Cf. also Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (cited in note 22) and *Histoire de la sexualité,* 1 (Paris, 1967) — it would lead too far to analyse these works in the present context. Yet, I should like to draw attention to Darwin's diagram of natural selection in *The Origin of Species,* where tree shapes branch out sideways and upward from roots, as it were, but these trees have no stem or top. See also the text in Mentor Book edition, New York, 1958, pp. 129 f.: "The affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree. I believe this simile largely speaks the truth. . . . As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever-branching and beautiful ramifications."

[134] The tree symbol was used in this sense already by St. Augustine, who in *De Genesi ad litteram* 8.9, CSEL 28, 1:243–245, compares the growth and cultivation of plants in Paradise and on earth with the development of mankind.

[135] Cf. A. Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (Oxford, London, 1934). See also my introductory paper "Terms and Ideas of Renewal," *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

[136] Isaiah 11.1: "Et egredietur virga de radice Iesse, et flos de radice eius ascendet."

contact, and there is continuity of being, which in the creational world view of the Christian Middle Ages is more an ascent than a descent, but an ascent transformed by the Incarnation and the grace resulting from it: the root and the whole tree prophetically and organically participate in the glory of the flower which is Christ. For, ultimately, graded continuity of being can rise from a metonymical part-part relationship to a synecdochal part-whole relationship,[137] in which the whole is held together and maintained in being by God. In the Tree of Jesse, and other kindred symbolic trees, the branches have significance only as part of the greater whole and with reference to Christ. God and Christ can also be conceived of as the exemplars of all lower being, for instance, by Bonaventure and Lull (see below).

The organic and "participatory" Tree of Jesse probably inspired similar use of the tree schema for other purposes. Still in the twelfth century one finds genealogical trees: for instance, that of the Carolingians in a manuscript of Frutolf's and Eckehard's world chronicle, Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 406, fol. 204v (Fig. 19). Here the ancestors are at the bottom, and through their size they anticipate the greatness of their descendents.[138] In the thirteenth century, the trees of the human race in Joachim of Flora's *Liber figurarum* symbolize the Joachimite three ages of sacred history and their correspondence to the three persons of the Trinity. This symbolism could be expressed by an ascending tree or by a tree which has grown in three circles.[139] Ever since the first half of the twelfth century there were also illustrations of trees of virtues and vices, for instance in the anonymous *Speculum virginum*, where *Humilitas* and *Caritas*, *Superbia* and *Luxuria*, respectively, are the roots and final fruits of these trees.[140]

In the later Middle Ages almost anything could be expressed in the form of trees. In this period the tree reached its full potentiality as a symbol of the hierarchy of being. This symbolism ranges from Ramon Lull and Matfré

[137] For the distinction between metonomy and synedoche see H. White (n. 28 above), pp. 31–37.

[138] Cf. *Katalog der Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen*, 6: E. Lutze, *Die Bilderhandschriften* (Erlangen, 1936), pp. 38 ff., Abb. 19. In the original manuscript of Frutolf's world chronicle, Jena, University Library, Bose Q 19 (of c. 1100), fol. 152v, the ancestors are still on the top.

[139] Cf. L. Tondelli, *Il Libro delle Figure dell'Abate Gioachino da Fiore*, 2nd ed. (Turin, 1953), pp. 37 ff. and Tav. 1 and 2, p. 57 and Tav. 22.

[140] See M. Bernards, *Speculum Virginum* (Cologne, Graz, 1955), pp. 77 ff., 26 ff., Pl. 2 and 3, after Cologne, Hist. Stadtarchiv, MS W, fol. 276a. Trees of virtues and vices are found in a very similar form in the treatise *De fructu carnis et spiritus* (printed among the works of Hugh of St. Victor, PL 176:997 ff.); for derivation of this work from the *Speculum Virginum*, cf. M. Bernards, "Das Speculum Virginum als Überlieferungszeuge frühscholastischer Texte," *Scholastik* 28 (1953), 69 ff. In the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer the iconography of the trees of virtue and vice, which are related to Church and Synagogue, respectively, is somewhat different; the root of virtue is *karitas* and each of the other virtues is identified by inscription with a different species of tree; vice is rooted in *cupiditas-avaritia*, and each of the other vices corresponds to *ficulnea*, the sterile fig tree condemned by Jesus (Luke 13.6–7); cf. the edition of Derolez (n. 60 above), pp. 462 f. (fols. 231v, 232r).

Ermengaud[141] to *Piers Plowman,*[142] from the German *Arbor amoris (Minnebaum)*[143] and the English *Desert of Religion*[144] to Honoré Bonet's *Arbre des batailles,* where a split tree is the symbol of the Great Schism and of war.[145]

As a symbol of Christ-centered cosmic and human life, the tree could also enliven the structure of sermons. A miniature in a fourteenth-century *ars praedicandi,* Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 23865, fols. 19v–20 (Fig. 20), illustrates the divisions of the theme of a sermon, which are indicated by inscriptions on the three main limbs of a tree and its many smaller branches.[146] "Praedicare est arborisare," as a late medieval preacher said.[147]

Widespread ideology and iconography of an *Arbor sapientiae*[148] could lead from humble grammar through the other liberal arts upward to the divine Trinity and could be juxtaposed with the *Arbor divini amoris,* as in an unpublished thirteenth-century series of pictorial schemata, Yale University, MS 416, fols. 6r (Fig. 21) and 5v.[149]

In this context, Ramon Lull, the great Catalonian of the late thirteenth century, made perhaps the fullest use of the tree as a symbol of the graded participation which is the only mode of unification existing between God and creatures. His *Arbre de ciencia,* written in 1295 as a more organically symbolic version of his famous *Ars generalis,* is an immense encyclopedia, striving for unification of knowledge.[150] Lull's *Arbre de filosofia d'amor* of 1298 contains the

[141] Matfré Ermengaud, *Breviari d'Amor,* ed. G. Azais (Béziers, Paris, s.a.). Matfré Ermengaud was a contemporary of Ramon Lull, whose use of tree symbolism is briefly discussed below. Though Matfré was a lesser mind, their mentalities were similar.

[142] See, for instance, E. T. Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The C-Text and Its Poet* (Archon Books, 1966), pp. 181 ff. and M. W. Bloomfield, "*Piers Plowman* and the Three Grades of Chastity," *Anglia* 76 (1958), 245 ff.

[143] Ed. U. Kamber, *Arbor Amoris, Der Minnebaum: Ein Pseudo-Bonaventura-Traktat* (Berlin, 1964), with an Excursus, "Baumsymbolik und Baumschematik," important for the later Middle Ages.

[144] Ed. W. Hübner and K. Schreiner, in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 126, N.S. 26 (1911), 58–74, 360–364; cf. M. W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan State University, 1967), p. 179.

[145] For Bonet's *Arbre des batailles,* see the edition by E. Nys (Brussels, etc., 1883), and *The Tree of Battles of Honoré Bonet,* trans. and introd. G. W. Coopland (Cambridge, Mass., 1949).

[146] Cf. Th.-M. Charland, O.P., *Artes Praedicandi* (Paris, Ottawa, 1936), frontispiece.

[147] Mauritius of Leyden (saec. XV); cf. Kamber, *Arbor Amoris,* p. 70.

[148] On earlier medieval wisdom trees see M.-Th. d'Alverny, "La sagesse et ses sept filles," *Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Félix Grat,* 1 (Paris, 1949), pp. 245 ff., especially 254 about Theodulf of Orleans's famous poem on a tree of wisdom from which the seven liberal arts and the four cardinal virtues branch out (MGH Poet. Lat. Med. Aevi 1 [Berlin, 1881; repr. 1978], 544–547). See also N. H. Steneck, "A Late Medieval *Arbor Scientiarum,*" SPECULUM 50 (1975), 245 ff., with ample bibliography.

[149] There are several other tree schemata in this series; see W. Cahn and J. Marrow, "Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at Yale: A Selection," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 52 (1978), 195 f., also for other manuscripts. I am grateful to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for permission to publish Fig. 21.

[150] Ed. T. and J. Carreras y Artau (Catalan text), in *Ramon Lull, Obras Essencials,* 1 (Barcelona, 1957), 555 ff. See ibid., p. 553, for the old editions of the Latin text (a new edition of it was then

complementary theory of man's love for God.[151] Both trees are meant to be not merely logical schemata — like the *Arbores Porphyrianae* (see n. 132 above) — but also and above all ontological representations: they symbolize the grades of being.

Figure 22[152] illustrates a miniature in a fourteenth-century manuscript of Ramon's Tree of Philosophy of Love in the Collegi de la Sapiencia of Palma de Majorca. The inscriptions on the tree and on its three times seven leaves name the tree's and the treatise's main parts and symbolize the principles and methods that enable man, the lover, to ascend to the beloved, that is, to God. The beginning is made at the lower left with a leaf that is inscribed "definitions" (of love). The symbolic scheme continues through an ascending hierarchy of concepts, signified by the inscribed leaves, until the fruits of love are reached, which are God himself, the works of God, and man's beatitude (*benauirança*) in the sight of God and His works.[153]

This ascent and God's creative action and redemptive descent into the world are the dominant themes of Ramon Lull's life's work as a theologian, philosopher, and poet. His is an exemplarist vision of the world,[154] which is also found a little earlier in St. Bonaventure.[155] Everything in different degrees imitates, mirrors, the ultimate exemplar, God. This world view and the differentiated as well as unifying tree scheme which expresses it are essential to Lull's conception of the relationship between multiplicity and unity. In his system of thought, polarity — which he calls *diferencia* — and unity — which he sees above all as *concordança* — are equally important.[156]

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in preparation), and the same authors' *Historia de la Filosofia Española*, 1 (Madrid, 1939), pp. 403 ff.

[151] Ed. J. Rubio (Catalan text), in *Ramon Lull, Obras Essencials,* 2 (Barcelona, s.a.), pp. 25 ff.; cf. T. and J. Carreras y Artau, *Historia* 1, pp. 600 ff. There is also a Latin text, of which there are only old editions (saec. XVI and XVIII).

[152] After *Obras Essencials*, 2, plate following p. 32.

[153] See the text in *Obras Essencials*, 2:26 ff.; also the partial English translation by E. A. Peers, *The Tree of Love* (London, 1926).

[154] E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1955), p. 353; J. N. Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1971).

[155] For Bonaventure's exemplarism see J.-M. Bissen, O.F.M., *L'exemplarisme divin selon saint Bonaventure* (Paris, 1929); E. Gilson, *La philosophie de Saint Bonaventure,* 3rd ed. (Paris, 1953), especially pp. 165 ff.: ch. 7, "L'analogie universelle." However, it is necessary to add that Bonaventure's conception of an analogy between creatures and God is expressed almost exclusively in terms of *vestigia Dei* and *imago-similitudo Dei* (cf. above). I quote only one famous text: *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum* 2.12, *Opera Omnia*, 5 (Quaracchi, 1891), p. 303: "Omnis enim creatura ex natura est illius aeternae sapientiae quaedam effigies et similitudo." However, he does speak of *participatio*, in at least two places, cited by Gilson, pp. 167 f. There can, of course, be no question of a *substantial* participation of creatures in God (cf. I *Sent.* 35 ad 2^{m}, *Opera Omnia*, 1 [Quaracchi, 1882], p. 601, and also ibid., 48.1.1, Concl., p. 852 f.), but on the other hand — and here he quotes St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.8.11 — man's soul is able to be an image of God just because it is *capax eius et particeps* (cf. II *Sent.* 16.1.1, Concl., ibid., 2 [1885], p. 395); see also *Breviloquium* 5.1, ibid., 5 (1891), 253: ". . . qui fruitur Deo Deum habet; . . . cum gratia . . . datur donum increatum, quod est Spiritus Sanctus, quod qui habet, habet et Deum."

[156] They both belong to the so-called dignities of God, which occur in many of Lull's works. See,

Diferencia in fact is crucial as the creative principle of individuation. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that contrary to those quasi-Manichaean modern interpretations of myths as well as of language and signification which were discussed in the first part of this paper, differentiation in Ramon Lull is not an ultimate; concord and Trinity-inspired unification through love are the consummation of all dualities and pluralities.[157] The vegetative-organic tree schemata of the Middle Ages — and even the considerably modified tree symbolism of the Renaissance[158] — were apt to express and represent something of the graded and continuous, and nevertheless differentiated, structure of the Christian cosmos of those ages.[159]

At the end, I want to recall — by means of three examples — how close symbolist poetry and art of the turn of the last century were to structuralist, or at least pre-structuralist, attitudes toward signs and symbols,[160] and how different from medieval symbolism.

There are first those famous remarks of Mallarmé in his *Divagations*, in which he suggests that the words of ordinary discourse hardly reveal that which is most essential in language. He expresses this thought in a way which is similar to Saussure's distinction between the individual word and the storehouse of language as a whole. But Mallarmé goes even further, beyond the contrast between word and language to that between thing and idea.

> I say "flower"! . . . And there arises, pure idea and sweet, the flower that is absent from all bouquets.[161]

In the poetic quest for absolute purity of form, the correspondence between the right word, the sublime idea and the things experienced has

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for instance, *Arbre de ciencia, Obras Essencials*, 1:774, and *Arbre de Filosofia d'Amor*, ibid., 2:26 f.; cf. L. Sala-Molins, *La philosophie de l'amour chez Raymond Lulle* (Paris, 1974), pp. 50 ff., 79 ff.

[157] For the dialectic of differentiation and unification in Lull see Sala-Molins, op. cit., especially pp. 196 ff.: the chapter on *unificiencia* and *amantia*.

[158] Cf. my article "Vegetation Symbolism," cited in note 66.

[159] For this mediaeval world view and its continuation in the Renaissance, including its further development through the revival of Platonism and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Florence, see the extremely interesting study by E. H. Gombrich, "Icones symbolicae," now in his *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, 2 (Oxford, New York, 1978), pp. 123 ff.; see especially 130 f. about tree schemata, and 151 ff. about two "contrasting ways in which [in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance traditions] God speaks to man in symbols: either representing like through like or like through unlike. The result is either Beauty or Mystery. Both these qualities are or can be a token of the Divine." It may be added that the latter way is not only Pseudo-Dionysian and apophatic, but also, linguistically, metonymic-synecdochic and, theologically, participatory and unitive, and thus connotes a certain contrast to the first way which is metaphorical and analogical.

[160] This has been observed also by others; see, for instance, J. A. Boon, *From Symbolism to Structuralism* (cited above, n. 28).

[161] Stephane Mallarmé, *Divagations* (Geneva, 1943), pp. 225 f.: "Je dis une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli ou ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets."

become extremely attenuated or even unattainable. So Stefan George — who in his youth had been a participant at Mallarmé's famous evenings in the rue de Rome — could still say at the end of his life:

> I learned resigned and saddening
> Where there is no word there is no thing.[162]

Finally, let us turn to what is perhaps the most famous painting by Gauguin and one of the most characteristic works of the symbolist movement of that time (Fig. 24). He gave it the title "Whence do we come, what are we, whither are we going?" He considered this picture, which is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, his artistic testament, and fortunately for us interpreted it in letters to his friends. I compare it here with a late-fifteenth-century miniature from the Missal of an Archbishop of Salzburg, by Berthold Furtmeyr (Fig. 23).[163] The latter shows a tree that is really two trees in one — it is a combination of the paradisiac Trees of Knowledge and of Life. The tree has grown a death's head because of Adam's and Eve's transgression, but the evil consequences — sin and death — represented on one side have been redeemed on the other by the sacrifice of the new Adam, Christ on the Cross, while the new Eve, Maria-Ecclesia, distributes the eucharistic hosts which grow on the tree alongside and really in lieu of the withered apples.

In Gauguin's picture the central figure likewise plucks a fruit from a tree, which however is invisible. The painter does not tell us whether he meant one of the trees of Paradise. He does interpret the gesture of the large seated figure in the center as one of astonishment: she wonders that the two women in the background dare reflect on destiny,[164] a destiny which in the rest of the painting seems to unfold from childhood to old age in a mood of beautiful but melancholy acceptance of life and death, presided over by an enigmatic idol.

Gauguin's work itself is enigmatic and highly selective, and its symbolism is barely expressible. As he himself said, perhaps adapting a formula of Mallarmé's,

> . . . the essential in a work [of art] precisely consists in that which is not expressed.[165]

[162] Stefan George, *Das Wort*, in *Das Neue Reich* (Berlin, 1937), p. 134:

> So lernt ich traurig den verzicht:
> Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht.

[163] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 15710, fol. 60v. Cf. E. Guldan, *Eva und Maria: Eine Antithese als Bildmotiv* (Graz, Cologne, 1966), pp. 142 and 152 (to the frontispiece, with bibliography).

[164] Cf. Gauguin's letter of February, 1898 to Monfreid, *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid* (Paris, 1918)., p. 201, no. 39. For Gauguin, see also E. Gilson, *Painting and Reality*, Bollingen Series 35, 4 (Washington, D.C., 1957), pp. 145 ff.

[165] Letter to André Fontainas of March, 1899, *Lettres de Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis* (Paris, 1946), p. 288: " . . . l'essentiel dans une oeuvre consiste précisement dans 'ce qui n'est pas

The form of Gauguin's thinking here is Mallarméan and Saussurian; the content of what he called "the essential" was for him the beautiful melancholy of a tropical Eden, of Paradise unredeemed and endangered. Gauguin found it in Tahiti and Lévi-Strauss recaptured the remnants of the mood in his *Tristes Tropiques*.

After comparing the last two pictures, as examples of medieval and modern symbolism, one may say that only the medieval one tries to answer Gauguin's question: "where does man come from, what is he, and whither does he go?" The Middle Ages could answer such questions because the dualism or polarity of life and death was then resolved through the Christian unification of a created with a redeemed universe. Here, of course, lies the deepest reason for all those differences between the two symbolisms which I have tried to compare with one another. If this is a truism, it is perhaps one that bears repeating.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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exprimé' . . ." (the words between single quotation marks may be part of an utterance of Mallarmé, whom Gauguin cites just before and after this sentence; I have not been able to find them in the works of Mallarmé).