

## 4. What do Christians believe about the Spirit and the church?

Crucifix, p.73

He Qi (b. 1951) is a contemporary Chinese Christian famous for his biblical art. His 1998 *Crucifixion* is appropriate to this chapter thanks to the prominent dove of the Spirit and to the suffering people gathered at the cross, who depict the hungry, naked, sick, and imprisoned that Jesus speaks of in his parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:35-36).

### Quotes and Images

p. 75: The monks in Senegal honor their totem, the picture of Christ at the Last Supper, and so come to embody the values of the social facts of their monastery.

p. 76: The quote from Durkheim indicates the importance of even those communal ritual experiences that outsiders may view as meaningless.

p. 77: Hannah More (1745–1833) was a British Christian important as a writer for the evangelical movement called the Clapham Sect. She advocated the abolition of slavery, the equality of women, the importance of Sunday Schools, and the improvement of the lot of the English poor. Her work *Practical Piety* was an assault on Deism.

p. 78: Ambrose, bishop of Milan (c. 338–397), was one of the most influential early Christian theologians. He baptized Augustine, catechized on the meaning of the sacraments, developed metaphoric interpretations of Scripture, stood up to Emperor Theodosius, and wrote hymns that are still sung.

p. 79: Charles G. Finney (1792–1875) was the most famous revival preacher of the nineteenth century. He developed “new measures” that capitalized on the emotions in conversion and spoke vigorously for social reforms.

p. 79: Francis of Assisi (c. 1182–1226), who believed that Christ had been poor, lived a countercultural life by replacing the growing influence of capitalism with a life-embracing poverty. The prayer acknowledges that believers need the power of the Spirit to be able to follow Jesus.

p. 80: The nineteenth-century printmakers Currier and Ives, perhaps best known for their winter scenes on contemporary Christmas cards, produced several images of the heavenly tree of life. This one depicts the dove of the Spirit and the twelve fruits mentioned in Rev. 22:2.

p. 81: For the Nicene Creed, see comment on p. 62.

p. 84: The Eastern Orthodox icon of the descent of the Holy Spirit shows the gathered community of twelve disciples (Acts 1:15-26), each radiating holiness. Those believed to be authors are holding scrolls. The figure at the base is a symbol of the cosmos, over which the Spirit hovers.

p. 85: “Every Time I Hear the Spirit” is an African American spiritual dated to before the Civil War. The Spirit inspires prayer.

p. 87: Randall Balmer’s (b. 1954) 1993 survey of evangelical churches in America, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, includes quotations from many different believers.

p. 88: The British-born Roman Catholic laywoman Edwina Gateley (b. 1943) has conducted mission, retreat, and relief work in Africa and the United States.

#### Suggestions, pp. 88–89

4. The text of *Veni Creator Spiritus* is available on Wikipedia in both Latin and English.

7. In “A New Life” (1991) by Mary Ward Brown (b. 1917), several members of the Keepers of the Vineyard, a local evangelical church-community, begin visiting Elizabeth North, a widow whose religious faith died when her husband died a year before. When she attends their service with its ritual of a circle of open prayer, she is repelled by their devotion. The “vineyard” is a biblical metaphor for the people of God. Discussion of the story can focus on the ambiguous motives of the Vineyard members and on Elizabeth’s reaction to their ministry to her and to God. With whom do the students sympathize? Why?

8. In Marilynne Robinson’s (b. 1943) 2004 novel *Gilead*, James Ames, who is nearing death, is writing a memoir for his young son. Ames, his father, his grandfather, and his best friend are all clergy; the Iowans in Gilead in the 1950s are active in churches—Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Quaker, and A.M.E.—and the novel includes many descriptions of sermons, worship, meetings, counseling sessions, the beliefs and the doubts that characterize the town’s Protestants. Gilead was an area in biblical Palestine that produced a medicinal balm from the *Styrax* tree, referred to in the spiritual “There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.” That such a religious novel won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction indicates its wide appeal.

9. Robert Duvall (b. 1931) wrote, directed, and starred in the 1997 film *The Apostle*. This remarkable movie deals with the Pentecostal preacher Sonny, “the Apostle E.F.,” who while on the run from the law establishes a Holiness church in Louisiana called the One Way Road to Heaven. This church conducts ecstatic worship, ennoble its members, and feeds the local poor, all with “Holy Ghost power.” Few commercial films have depicted Christian worship with such accuracy and respect. Discussion of the film can focus on the ways this Holiness community understands the working of the Spirit.