

Damien Hirst deconstructs the Holy Trinity

Kenneth Baker | *Galleries*

Hirst re-sees God: We have seen little if any of British art rascal Damien Hirst's work hereabouts since the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art showed one of his infamous creature-parts-in-formaldehyde sculptures in 2004.

That piece came from a series purportedly inspired by "The Last Supper" and bore the name of a disciple: Philip.

A tamer take on "The Last Supper" — tamer until you think about it — figures in Serge Sorokko's entertaining presentation of Hirst's 2005 series of works in editions, "The New Religion."

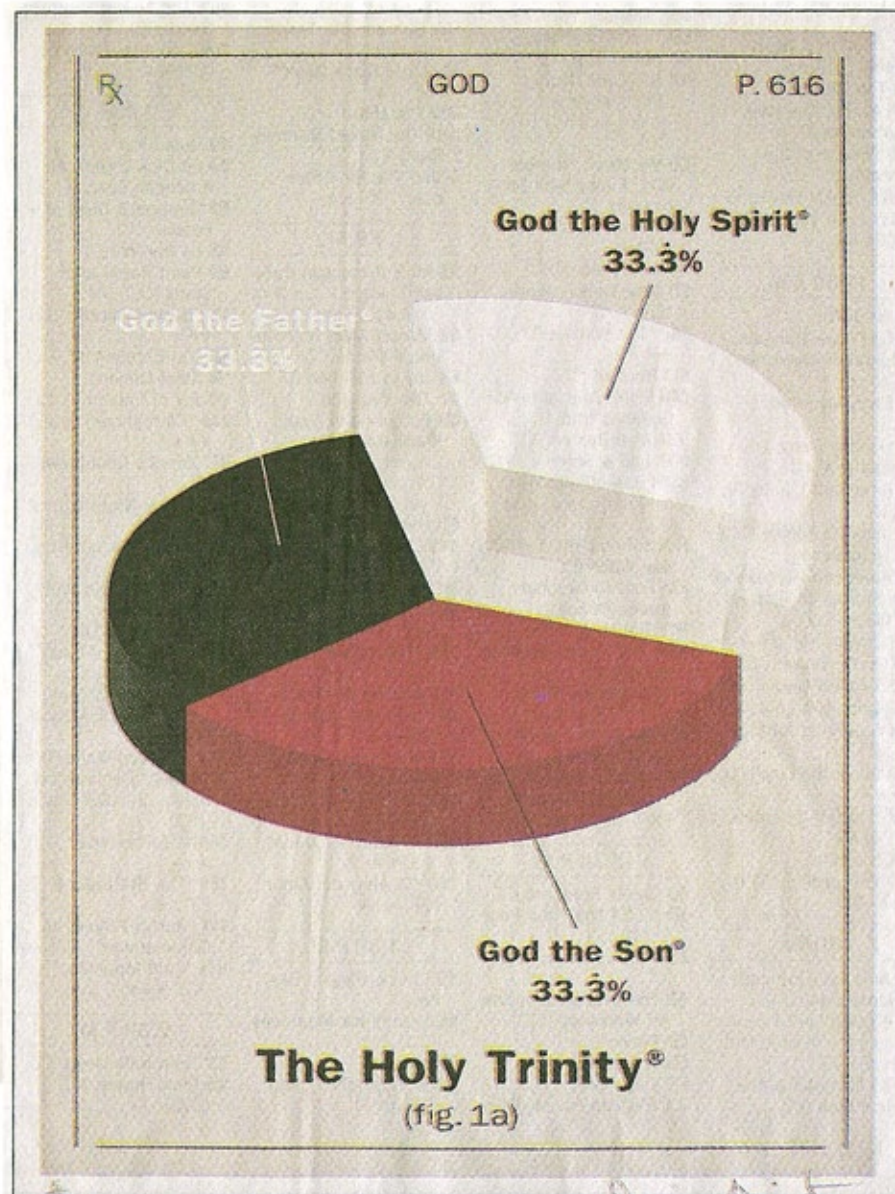
Here "The Last Supper" appears as a world map that assigns disciples' names, and Jesus', to 13 nations known to possess or suspected of having nuclear weapons or weapons programs. How dry its portents seem compared with the visceral shock of his slivered animal carcasses.

A comic artist at his best, Hirst nearly always blares his punch lines. In "The New Religion" he extends a tart analogy between faith in God and faith in science until it thins almost to blandness.

A few pieces, such as the carved marble sculpture "The Eucharist" — a giant tablet of paracetamol, known in America as acetaminophen — plays on the efficacy of a substance taken orally, with nods to Pop art and to the stone common to many classics of Christian sculpture.

The print "Holy Trinity" may also draw a laugh, making a pie chart of God's tripartite nature.

But when Hirst runs the parallel between saints, or the Stations of the Cross, and pharmaceuticals out sheet after sheet, in sizable editions, you suspect him of merely serving mammon, as well as himself.



Serge Sorokko Gallery

"Holy Trinity" (2005), silk-screen on paper, by Damien Hirst.