

# *King Solomon & the Temple Builders: A Biblical Reading of Giorgione's Painting "The Three Philosophers"*

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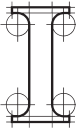
N 1981 PETER MELLER REFERRED TO THE MANY CONTRADICTORY INTER-pretations of Giorgione's painting "The Three Philosophers"<sup>1</sup> (figure 1) as a "vicious circle." Only three years previously, Salvatore Settis had surveyed the critical history of the painting in *La "Tempesta" Interpretata* (1978), to reargue the case made two centuries earlier in 1783 that its three figures portrayed there were the "Three Magi."<sup>2</sup> Meller reexamined its iconography from the clues offered by Marcantonio Michiel in his celebrated note of 1525 written after seeing it in the house of Taddeo Contarini in Venice: namely, "three philosophers ... marvelously imitated rock ... rays of the sun ... landscape,"<sup>3</sup> and concluded that we are looking at Plato as metaphysician standing with two pupils before his own metaphorical cave. If the images of bare and leafed trees, ivy and fig, dark and light, represent original sin and resurrection, then we might have "un tipico paesaggio moralizzato" in which the Platonic parable prefigures Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Support for the "Three Magi" identification has since been revived by E. H. Gombrich in 1986, but in 1995 Simona Cohen argued



Figure 1. Giorgione. "The Three Philosophers." Eric Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.

cogently that the three figures must represent the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

A difficulty with in such theories is the “cave” assumption. Michiel did not refer to it as a cave, after all, but a “rock,” and there is no evidence that it is more than that, whether the rock has been eroded or quarried into its depicted shape.<sup>6</sup> To some critics none of that matters:

But, for Giorgione’s purpose, the identification of all these figures seems irrelevant. If there is a theme in these pictures, it is the drama of all nature, in which each element—man, tree, rock, sky—plays an important part.<sup>7</sup>

“The Three Philosophers” is a complex work of art, so its solution could prove equally complex. Giorgione has set the scene in some hills above a plain, on an apparently quarried, stepped platform before a concave rock-face. From its right-hand rim grows a young poplar, and scattered leaves of fig and ivy lie on the ground. Behind stand two mature trees, one bare, one in full leaf. In the plain below, a substantial building with a tower and a water-wheel appears framed in the cleft marked by the rock and the trees. The sun sets softly over the horizon. A mysterious source of light which seems not to be that sun illuminates a glowing rectangle of light high up that east-facing rock.

In the centre of the painting sits a youthful, dark-haired man (figure 2) wearing an embroidered dalmatic and holding a square and compasses. An architect or master-builder perhaps. He seems to be looking intently at that same patch of light on the rock-face.<sup>8</sup>

At the right, a mature, full-bearded and cowed philosopher-figure<sup>9</sup> (figure 3) is also showing obvious interest in that patch of light, but without looking directly at it, displaying in his hands a chart containing zodiacal symbols and letters: a word, possibly *CELUS* (sky) or *CRISTO*.<sup>10</sup> The chart seems to possess a brilliance of its own (the light on the rock may actually come from it), and its apparent thickness suggests a gold tablet or foil. This “philosopher” seems to be the only one of the three actually speaking.

The dress and demeanor of the central figure with the turban (figure 4) suggests an aristocratic Moslem.<sup>11</sup> His pose is relaxed and passive, but expectant. Unlike the other two, he looks not at the rock but at that figure on the right with the mysterious chart.

Let us suppose that these three figures are the three builders of King Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem; they are (right to left), Solomon himself, King Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram the Master Craftsman of Tyre, the man seconded by Solomon to his grand project.<sup>12</sup> The features of the cowed philosopher-figure on the right concord with the King Solomon (a figure apparently completed by another hand) in Giorgione’s own “Judgment of Solomon” (figure 5): there



Figure 2. Giorgione. "The Three Philosophers" (detail showing youthful man, perhaps Hiram, the master craftsman of Tyre, wearing a embroidered dalmatic and holding a square and compasses). Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.





Figure 3. Giorgione. "The Three Philosophers" (detail showing full-bearded and cowled philosopher, perhaps King Solomon, holding a chart containing zodiacal symbols and letters: a word, possibly *CELUS* [sky] or *CRISTO*.). Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.



Figure 4. Giorgione. "The Three Philosophers" (detail showing central figure, perhaps Hiram King of Tyre, with the turban, suggesting an aristocratic Moslem.). Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.

Solomon is elderly, full-bearded, fully-robed (without a cowl), his expression one of deep concentration.<sup>13</sup> In the background the artist has represented Solomon's temple with a spire and dome (figure 6).

Biblical accounts of Solomon's succession to the throne of his father David (as Bathsheeba's second son) are given in 1 Kings: 1–15 to 2:10 and 1 Chronicles 29:26. David had already established a royal sanctuary on Mount Moriah at Jerusalem, and to Solomon as his heir fell the task of constructing a temple according to his orders, worthy of the Lord (1 Chronicles 28). Solomon's reputation as a supremely wise and righteous ruler, the virtues he had prayed for (1 Kings 3:3–15), was later sullied by his lust and worship of false gods, and for that he would be punished by God (1 Kings 11–12).

For the construction of King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem we have three ancient literary sources: 1 Kings 5:13–8:66, 1 Chronicles 2:1–7:22, and Flavius Josephus' *Jewish History* 8.42–141. On King David's death, we read, King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to congratulate the successor to the throne of his old friend. Solomon replied with a request for timber from Lebanon—cedar and fir. Hiram obliged (1 Kings 5:1–7). Logs were cut then floated by sea to Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 5:9–10). In return, Solomon supplied Hiram with great quantities of grain and oil (1 Kings 5:11). He dispatched 70,000 workmen to carry building material, and 80,000 stonecutters *to the mountains* to quarry and dress stone (1 Kings 5:15). Huge blocks were laid and squared for the foundations (the construction is described in great detail in 1 Kings 6–7).

Then Solomon brought the master-craftsman and specialist in the casting of bronze from Tyre, Hiram Abi, the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali and a Tyrian father (1 Kings 7:13–14). He to do all of that work for Solomon's Temple: “qui, cum venisset ad Regem Salomonem, fecit omne opus eius.” By the middle ages, this Hiram was already invested with the role of master architect and project manager for the Temple, responsible for all aspects of its design and construction. The legend of “Hiram Abif” would be passed from the guilds (lodges) of masons of the middle ages to the lodges of the Speculative masons and to Freemasonry as a whole.<sup>14</sup> Giorgione's seated figure holds square and compasses, and is dressed in an aristocratic embroidered dalmatic. (Prior to final revisions to the painting, he wore the tall cap of “*un studioso*.”)<sup>15</sup> He, then, would be Hiram Abi, engineer and architect.

The Temple had been a “powerful image in Isaiah's experience of the presence of God” (Isaiah 6: 1–6). In the New Testament it became a metaphor for the divinely-ordained prefiguring of a Temple of God “not made with hands.” The “Stone which the builders rejected” (Psalms 117:22, Isaiah 28:16, etc.) expanded the architectural metaphor, along with the idea of the Faithful as “living stones” of the Temple (Galatians 2:9, Revelations 3:12). The Allegory of the Temple as





Figure 5. Giorgione. "The Judgment of Solomon" (detail allowing comparison of the cowled philosopher with King Solomon). Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.





Figure 6. Giorgione. "The Judgment of Solomon" (detail showing in the background the representation of Solomon's temple with a spire and dome). Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

prefiguring the “Body of Christ” was developed by Church Fathers such as Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great.<sup>16</sup> Bede’s homily *De Templo*<sup>17</sup> reminds us of the etymologies of the names Solomon (“Peacemaker”) and Hiram (“Living Exaltedly”). Solomon had chosen collaborators from the Gentiles (*De Templo*, 148), and masons of both had hewn the stones for the Temple. Hiram might also be taken, Bede continues (*De Templo*, 148–49), as representing those temporal rulers who after conversion had helped the Church against heretics, schismatics and pagans. Bede’s commentary on Hiram Abi continues in this vein: when he carried out Solomon’s projects it was done “*mysterii gratia*” to prefigure God’s selection of the Gentiles as Ministers of his Word (*De Templo*, 197). His being a bronze worker was allegorically right, for bronze, like the word, is lasting and far-resounding: “*aeris namque metallum valde esse durable constat atque omnimodo sonorum*” (*De Templo*, 198).

The middle figure, elegantly and colorfully dressed as a noble Arab, would then be Hiram King of Tyre. Having no *technical* responsibilities himself, he seems relaxed but curious, his right thumb hooked over his sash as if awaiting some revelation from the cowed figure on the right with the tablet or scroll.

Giorgione casts “Solomon” as a philosopher with an astrological chart and (like Hiram) a pair of compasses. 1 Kings 4:29–34 characterize Solomon as a polymath, his wisdom being the prayed-for gift of God (1 Kings 3: 9–15) as vast as the sands of the shores. He was wiser than all the sages of the East and of Egypt (1 Kings 4:30–31). He composed three thousand proverbs and one thousand five psalms. (Later the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes would be attributed to him as well.) He was a biologist, expert in trees and vines, animals, birds, reptiles and fish. His wisdom brought many visitors to hear and consult him (1 Kings 4:32–34). According to the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, he investigated all nature scientifically, and knew charms against demons (*Jewish Antiquities*, 8.44). Josephus attributed the foundation of astronomy to the Hebrews (*Jewish Antiquities*, 1.3). By the middle ages the traditions of Solomon’s prodigious learning was extended even to the heavens, as attested by a 910-line poem in Old French, “Le Lunaire Que Salemons Fist.” Solomon’s *lunarium* was a table drawn up to guide his son Reboam in all he did, day by day through the months of the year:<sup>18</sup>

Much he taught him of far-away things, then opened to  
him very well the doctrines of the chief arts, and showed  
him all the power and courses of the moon, and its waxings  
and wanings. Of the moon he made a table that is most  
valuable and respected. It is called “Solomon’s Table.”



Figure 7. "The Three Philosophers" (X-ray detail).

Photo courtesy of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



In those books of the Bible attributed to Solomon, the sun is a pervasive image of beauty, constancy and intelligence. Ecclesiastes refers frequently to the pain and weariness of life “under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3 *et passim*). The famous exhortation “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” continues (Ecclesiastes 12:2: “before the sun and the light and the moon and stars are darkened.” Solomon’s bride (Song of Songs 6: 9) is “as fair as the moon, as choice as the sun.” His gift of Wisdom came as the “risen sun” (Song of Songs 5:6). A good woman is like the sun (Ecclesiastes 26:21), the holy man as constant as the sun (Ecclesiastes 27:12). The sun itself is the “wonderful vessel, work of the Most High.”

The overpainted draft (*pentimento*) of the “Solomon” figure revealed by X-rays in 1932 seems to have been looking directly at the light on the rock, and wearing a tall rayed crown, which Cohen saw as the “rays” of Moses.<sup>19</sup> By the reading offered here, it was Solomon’s royal crown. (figure 7) The fig and ivy leaves scattered on the edge of the rock face would symbolize Solomon’s peaceable reign (1 Kings 4:25—ivy is used similarly in Jonah 4). Meller saw these leaves as allusions to salvation and original sin.<sup>20</sup>

Compasses indicate an astrologer or architect. In *De Architectura* (*Editio Princeps*: Rome, 1486) Vitruvius was at pains to stress the learning and the native ability required by the craft of architecture (his contemporary Horace required both for the craft of verse): “Neither talent without discipline nor discipline without talent can make a perfect craftsman” (*De Architectura* 1.3). The *disciplina* of the architect included history, philosophy, music, medicine, law, astronomy and the *caeli rationes* (*De Architectura* 1.3). He also had to learn to use the rule (*euthygramma*) and compasses (*circini*). Buildings must be sited “in strict accordance with the regions of the sky” (*De Architectura* 1.4) to take advantage of the sun and climate (*De Architectura* 1.4). Philosophy will ensure that the architect is not *adrogans*, but rather *aequus* and *fidelis*, and free of *avaritia* (*De Architectura* 1.6). The study of Medicine will teach the architect about the *inclinatio caeli* (Greek *climata*) (*De Architectura* 1.10); Astrologia, the motions of the sun, the seasons, the paths of the stars—without which the sundial would be incomprehensible (*De Architectura* 1.10; 9.1). Vitruvius also explains the principles of quarrying, dressing, curing of building stone, and of estimating the quantities needed (*De Architectura* 2.7); the phases and risings of the moon (*De Architectura* 9.2) and the sun’s course through the zodiac (*De Architectura* 9.3).<sup>21</sup>

The setting of Giorgione’s “marvelously imitated rock” (Michiel) resembles a worked quarry, like the quarry-landscape for his “Tramonto” which also shows a similar rock-face (along with a water-filled pit, the lake of St. George’s dragon).<sup>22</sup> For the representation of an *active* quarry (figure 8) as part of a building



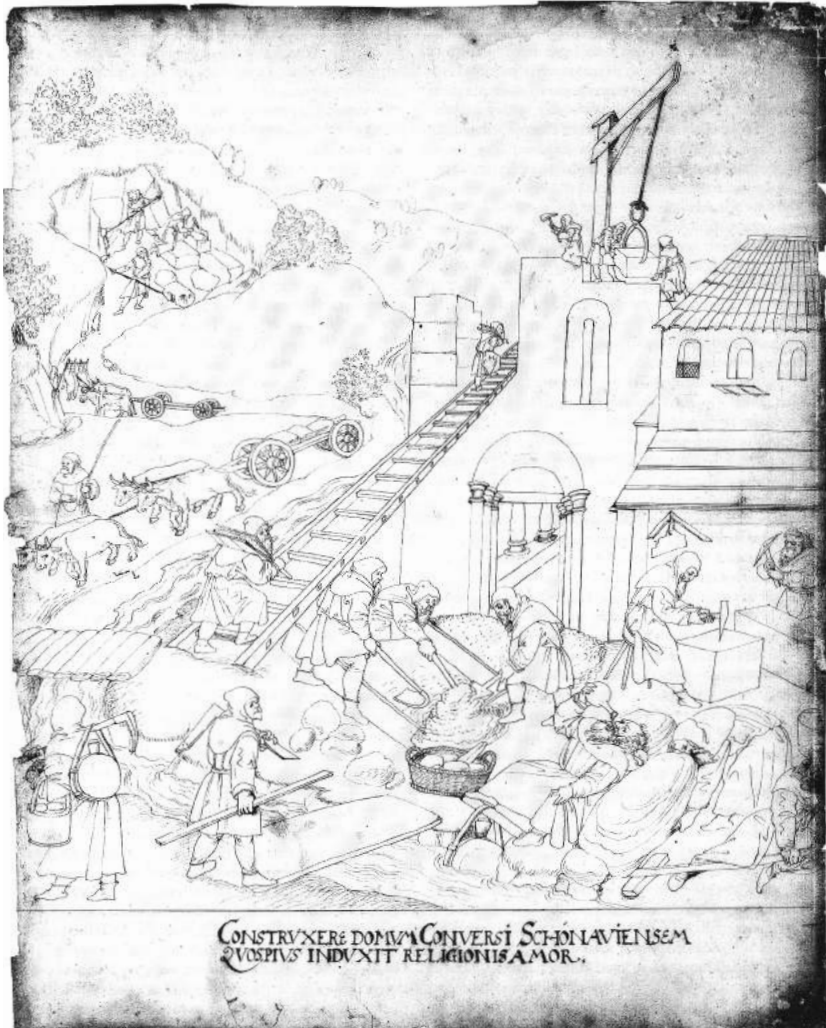


Figure 8. The Construction of the Abbey-Church of Schonau.  
Photo courtesy of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nurnberg.

project see following sixteenth-century engraving of the construction of the Abbey-Church of Schöna. <sup>23</sup>

What is to be made of Giorgione's large towered building (figure 9) with the water-wheel in the plain below? It is unlikely to be either Solomon's Temple or palace, for both were huge and richly constructed of cedar and costly stone; even the palace measured 100 × 50 cubits, with a height of 30 cubits (1 Kings 7: 1–11). In Giorgione's "Judgment of Solomon" both Temple (as a basilica with dome) and Palace (with a spire) appear in the background. In his original version of the "Three Philosophers" as revealed by X-ray in 1932 the building appeared on a hill-top, not in a plain, and also seemed to have a spire and a dome. In the revised version we have is a mill, but what kind of mill? In 1544 Cardinal Bessarion saw water-wheels in Italy driving saw-mills and blast-furnaces. <sup>25</sup> They had been used from the middle ages to power brass foundries, <sup>26</sup> forge hammers, <sup>27</sup> and stone-saws. <sup>28</sup> Vitruvius had described their various applications in milling grain in Roman times. <sup>29</sup>

Constructing the Temple and palace required vast amounts of sawn lumber and dressed stone, and Hiram Abi needed tons of copper and tin for bronze castings. Solomon had shipped tons of grain and oil to Tyre (both of which in the Renaissance could have been processed by water-power). Representing the Temple and palace originally high on Mount Moriah would have made the riddle simpler than his patron intended. <sup>30</sup>

What then would Giorgione's three "Temple-builders" have been doing together at a hill-quarry outside Jerusalem at sunset? Two seem to be looking towards the patch of light illuminating the rock-face, glowing from a mysterious unknown source or from the foil or tablet inscribed with astrological symbols, symbols that may have brought them to this spot for a revelation. The stone itself could relate to the Temple, if it were the Biblical corner-stone (*lapis angularis*) which the builders rejected. First mentioned in Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:11, it represented Israel. In the New Testament (1 Peter 2:1–9) the same stone has come to represent Christ and Salvation:

So you will find in scripture the words, Behold, I am setting down in Sion a corner-stone, chosen out and precious; those who believe in him will not be disappointed. Prized then, by you, the believers, he is something other to those who refuse belief; the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief stone in the corner, a stone to trip men's feet, a boulder they stumble against. They stumble over God's word, and refuse it belief; it is their destiny. Not so you; you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people God means to have for himself; it is yours to proclaim the exploits of the God who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. <sup>31</sup>



Figure 9. "The Three Philosophers" (Detail showing large towered building with water wheel). Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus, speaking in the Temple identifies himself as that Stone.

And Jesus said to them, Have you never seen those words in the scriptures,  
The very stone which the builders rejected has become the chief stone at  
the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in your eyes?

To the texts associating Solomon with the images of sun and moon, one may add the *Divina Commedia*. Canto X of *Paradiso* takes Dante past the first three heavens beyond the shadow of the Earth—the Moon, Mercury, and Venus—to a second group comprising the spheres of the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, as abodes of the Saints. There within the fifth sun in the Heaven of the Sun dwells Solomon (a figure alluded to three times by Dante, though never by name).<sup>32</sup>

Dante wrote (*Paradiso*, Canto X, 109–14):

The fifth light, which amongst us is most fair,  
doth breathe from such a love that all the world  
down there thirsteth to know the news of it;

within there is the lofty mind, to which a wisdom  
so profound was granted, that, if the truth be  
true, no second ever rose to such full vision.<sup>33</sup>

In Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto XXX, 10–12, Solomon greeted Beatrice with his own words of adoration from the Song of Solomon (4:8):

Anon one of them, as if sent from heaven, "Veni  
sponsa de Libano" did shout thrice in song,  
and all the others after him.

Solomon was partly rehabilitated in the Middle Ages by Hugh of St. Victor and St. Bernard through interpretations of the Song of Solomon as prefiguring the mystical union betwixt Christ and his church. The Wisdom of Solomon 7:7–8 also expresses a passionate devotion to God-given Wisdom:

I prayed, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. This I valued more than  
kingdom or throne; I thought nothing of my riches in comparison.

The setting sun, the square and compasses of Hiram Abi along with the compasses and astrological chart of Solomon and (Wisdom, Knowledge, and Prophecy), the glowing Stone and the fig-leaves and trees (Christ and Salvation) provide powerful images for "The Three Philosophers." The dramatic figure of Solomon as philosopher-king, astrologer, and Temple-builder provides a focus for Gior-gione's allusions to the Bible, Josephus, Vitruvius, Dante, and possibly Bede.<sup>34</sup>



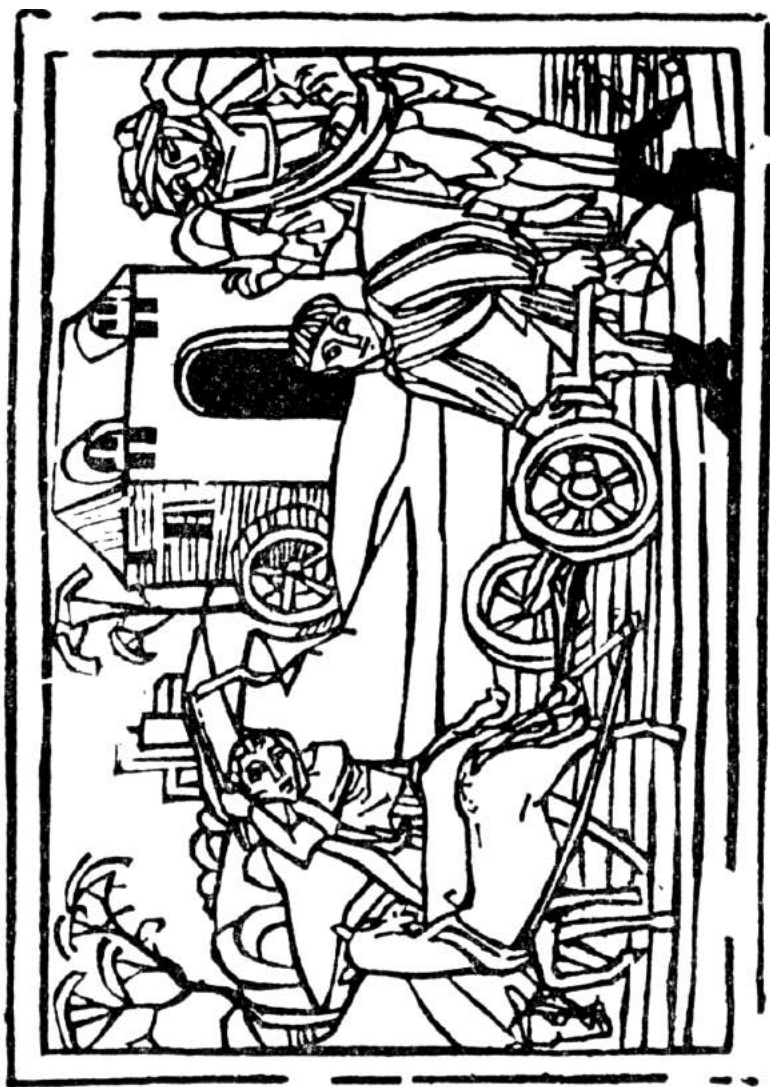


Figure 10. Agriculture. Rodericus Zamorensis. *Speculum Humane Vite*.  
Augsberg: Zainer, 1475 (Klemm 46.10). Courtesy of M.I.T. Press.

Solomon no longer looks *directly* at the Light and the Stone (as he apparently had once done in Giorgione's earlier draft). Only the deeply reflective Hiram Abi in the dalmatic, in fact, does. As the inspired master-craftsman of the Temple, perhaps he sees in it that potential Cornerstone—Christ. Of the three it is Hiram of Tyre, represented as a Moslem, who does not see the meaning of *their* “marvelously imitated rock.”<sup>35</sup>

## APPENDIX

*A brief account of Giorgione's "Three Philosophers" from the Catalogue of the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum: <http://www.khm.at/khm/staticE/page711.html>*

As little as is known about Giorgione's life, it is clear that his influence on the art of Venice in the early 16th century was decisive. Giorgione was born about 1477 in the province of Venetia and moved into the city at the turn of the century, like almost all the great painters there, to work and study with Giovanni Bellini. Giorgione died of the pest at the age of thirty. From the few authenticated works of his (they may be counted on the fingers of both hands), the Viennese Collection possesses two: the portrait “Laura” and the Three Philosophers. Much speculation has been done about the actual meaning of the Three Philosophers. Whether or not it is about three stages of man's life, or three different philosophical (or mathematical) schools, or the three Magi remains unexplained. The reason for this enigma is that the theme was made to order for an exclusive patron and only known to him, his friends and the painter. Even the original title, certified in 1525, Three Philosophers in a Landscape ... with That Wonderfully Painted Rock, indicates the new and unusual in Giorgione's work. For the first time, landscape attains the same importance as the human figure. Unprecedented was also the way his painting methods were concentrated on colour effect. Giorgione created an illusion of airiness and atmosphere in his landscapes by using warm, delicately shaded colours over relatively large areas and by letting one hue flow into another similar one. Instead of the geometrically constructed central perspective, he employed the visual experience of an aerial perspective and its *sfumato* (smoky effect of light and shade), suggesting the spatial depths by colours and contours that melt in to the distance. The novelty and intensity of Giorgione's expressive media—colour, light and atmosphere—fascinated his Venetian contemporaries and “Giorgionism” made itself felt in the art of his successors long after his death.



Figure 11. Billett Furnace. Lucas van Valckenborgh, 1575 (Klemm 80.7).  
Courtesy of The M.I.T. Press.

NOTES

1. Oil on canvas cm. 123.3 × 144.5; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. 111. <<http://www.khm.at/khm/staticE/page711.html>> The authors extend sincere thanks to colleagues P. D. Du Prey, J. MacPherson, W. McLeod, A. W. Riley, M. Riley, and J. D. Stewart for their generous criticism of and assistance with this paper.

2. P. Meller, "I 'Tre Filosofi' di Giorgione." In *Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano*, ed. R. Palluchini (Firenze: Leo Olschki, 1981), pp. 227–47. For excellent bibliographies on this painting, see also S. Settis, "*La Tempesta*" *Interpretata, i committenti, il soggetto* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1978), pp. 19–45; *Giorgione's Tempest. Interpreting the Hidden Subject*. Trans. E. Bianchini (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 15–47; T. Pignatti, *Giorgione* (Venezia: Alfieri, Edizioni d'Arte, 1969), pp. 104–105; A. P. Torrini, *Giorgione. Catalogo completo* (Firenze: Cantini, 1993), pp. 152–59.

3. La tela a oglio delli 3 phylosophi nel paese, due ritti ed uno sentado che contempla gli raggi solari cun quel saxo finto cusi mirabilmente, fu cominciata da Zorzi del Castel-franco, et finita da Sebastiano Veneziano." For the text of Michiel see *Der Anonimo moreliano*. (Marcanton Michiel's *Notizia d'opere di disegno* = *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*. N.F., Bd. 1 (Wien: C. Graeser, 1888); G. C. Williamson, ed., *The Anonimo. Notes on Pictures and Works of Art in Italy Made by an Anonymous Writer in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Paolo Mussi (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903). Pignatti (65) dates the painting around 1508.

4. Meller (note 1) 231.

5. E. H. Gombrich, "A note on Giorgione's 'Three Philosophers,'" *Burlington Magazine*, 128 (1986), p. 488; S. Cohen, "A new perspective on Giorgione's Three Philosophers." *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 126 (1995): pp. 53–64; M. Calvesi. "Il tema della sapienza nei 'Tre Filosofi,'" in *Giorgione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio per il 50 Centenario della Nascita*. 29–31 Maggio 1978 (Venezia: Banco Popolare di Asolo e Montebellino, 1978), pp. 83–90. C. Hornig argued in that same volume ("Una nuova proposta per i 'Tre Filosofi,'" pp. 47–51) that the figures were three contemporary painters earnestly discussing their crafts (i.e., Giorgione, Carpaccio, Bellini).

6. Compare the similar rock formations that suggest quarrying in other Giorgione paintings: e.g. "Giudizio di Salomone" (Judgment of Solomon) (Pignatti, pl. 31), "Adorazione dei Pastori" (Pignatti, pl. 35), "Tramonto" (Pignatti, pl. 99), "Omaggio ad un Poeta." (Pignatti, pl. 141) Two copies (one a parody) by D. Teniers suggest that Giorgione's canvas used to be wider by some 31 cm (Torrini, [note 1] p. 86), and that the copiest himself saw no cave in the original (see Pignatti, [note 1] p. 78, figs. 25, 26).

7. Jay Williams and the Editors of Time-Life Books, *The World of Titian* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1966), pp. 66–67; see also Hornig (note 5), pp. 47–48.

8. Such an identification is also supported by a detail in Vasari's painting in the Sala



dei Cento Giorni of the Cancelleria in Rome, "Life of Paul III," in which a female figure of "Architecture" (kneeling, her back to the viewer) holds square and compasses. See Vitruvius 1.3. Giorgione also represents a square and compasses in his "Fregio delle Arti Liberali" (Castelfranco, casa Marta Pellizzari; see Pignatti [note 1] fig. 59), where they seem to have astronomical purposes, an idea most critics infer for the "Three Philosophers." The seated figure has variously been taken as an astrologer, Magus, geometer, philosopher, or theologian.

9. Meller (note 2)

10. For the *CELUS* reading and a detailed attempt to read the symbols, see R. Eisler, *The Royal Art of Astrology* (London: H. Joseph, 1946), p. 264, as well as Eisler's partly-published letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* (Settis, 25, 43 note 25 [It]; 25, 163 note 25 [E]), "... his movement is meant to connect with the watch for the heliacal rise of the star heralding the birth of the Saviour Child." P. Meller (note 1, p. 229) read *CRISTO*, which would also fit the Three Magi.

11. Cohen, (note 4) p. 58 sees his turban as distinctly Ottoman. Conclusions drawn from Wilde's 1932 published X-ray examination of the painting, that the middle figure in the earlier version had been African, are now seriously questioned. See J. Wilde. "Röntgenaufnahmen der Drei Philosophen und der Zigeunermadonna Tizians." *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen in Wien* 6 (1932), pp. 141–54; Pignatti, p. 78, fig. 24; L. Mucchi, *Caratteri radiografici della pittura di Giorgione* (Firenze: Edizioni Alinari, 1978), pp. 52–53.

12. This hypothesis was first put forward by the late Neil K. MacLennan, Kingston architect and Mason (Scottish Rite, Bath, Ontario), co-author of this paper.

13. "Il Giudizio di Salomone" (panel, cm 89 × 72) (Firenze: Uffizi), inv. 947 (pl. 34 Pignatti); compare Solomon's dress in Sebastiano Veneziano's painting of the same theme (Kingston Lacy, Wimborne; see Peter Meller. "I Tre Filosofi di Giorgione," in *Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano*, vol. I, ed. R. Palucchini (Firenze: Leo S. Olshki, 1981), p. 229. fig. 60.

14. In 1 Chronicles he is called Hiram-Abi, the "Hiram Abiff" of Masonic tradition. The literature on Freemasonry and its "Legend of the Craft" enormous. See for example, Albert G. Mackey, W. J. Singleton. *The History of Freemasonry. Its Legends and Traditions, Its Chronological History*, six vols. (New York and London: Masonic History Co., 1905); Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry. An Account of the Rise of Freemasonry in its Operative, Accepted and Early Speculative Phases* (London: Q. C. Correspondence Circle in association with Quatuor Coronati Lodge N. 2076, 1978); David Stevenson. *The Origin of Freemasonry. Scotland's Century*. Cambridge: CUP, 1988; Wallace McLeod, *The Old Gothic Constitutions. Facsimile Reprints of four early printed texts of the Masonic Old Charges: the pamphlets issued by Roberts (1722), Briscoe (1724), Cole (1729), and Dodd (1739)*, Volume Sixteen of the publications of the Masonic Book Club (Bloomington, Ill.: The Masonic Book Club, 1985); Mary A. Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood. Class, Gender, and Fraternalism*, (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989);

J. S. Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London: Batsford, 1991). Masonry would become equated with geometry as one of the seven liberal arts (Clawson, p. 20), and its lore repeated at masonic meetings (the earliest versions of "The Old Charges" date from 1400). Much was made of Solomon's Temple as "the greatest of all building projects, central to the development and dissemination of masonry" (Clawson, p. 24). According to "The Old Charges" the crafts were founded by the three sons and the daughter of Lamech, and Geometry by Jabal, one of them. His secrets were rediscovered after the flood on some stone pillars. Noah's great grandson Hermarines (Hermes Trismegistus) found one pillar. Nimrod later built the Tower of Babel. King David was a patron of the masons, and Solomon spread the craft (Stevenson, pp. 20–21). According to G. Leti, *Carboneria e massoneria nel risorgimento italiano* (Genova: Libreria Editrice Moderna, 1925), p. 3, there were masonic grades and an initiation legend in fourteenth-century Siena. For masonic organization on the continent, see Knoop, pp. 52–53.

15. Meller (note 1)

16. Connolly, pp. xxiii–xxviii.

17. For Bede's use of allegory see Connolly's discussion (p. xxviii) of *De Schematibus et Tropis*. The Latin text of the *De Templo* is cited in Hurst's edition, *Beda's Venerabilis opera*. cura et studio D. Hurst OSB. Pars II 2A (Turnbolti: Typographii Brepols Editores Pontificii, MCMLXIX), pp. 235–62.

18. "27 Moult li dist de choses loigtaines,/ Puis li aprist des souveraines/ Des arz moult bien le doctrina/ 30 Et de la lune li mostra/ Toute las force et touz les tourz,/ Et les crois-sanz et les descours./ De la lune Wst une table,/ qui moult est ciere et honorée:/ 35 Table Salemon est nomée." For this little-known text see D.-M. Méon, *Nouveaux recueil de fabliaux et contes inédits des poètes français des XIIe, XIIIe, XIVe, et XVe siècles* (Paris: Chasserian, Libraire-Éditeur, 1823), pp. 364–93.

19. Cohen (note 4), pp. 53–57.

20. Meller (note 1), p. 231.

21. Compare Giorgio Vasari's representation of the Muse of Architecture with square and compasses in his fresco of "The Life of Paul III," Sala dei Cento Giorni, Cancelleria, Rome.

22. For Giorgione's "Tramonto" see Pignatti (note 1 above), pl. XVI, pp. 66, 106.

23. See Curl (note 12), pp. 22–23. At the top left of the panoramic view of Schönau is the rock-face of a hill-quarry, with young trees growing around it (perhaps poplars, which grow quickly in high rocky soil) as in the "Three Philosophers" and "Tramonto." Blocks are quarried and rough-hewn for delivery by ox-cart down a steep road to the site, there to be dressed and laid. A master-builder with his square and rule is crossing the bridge. Hanging in the shelter of the lodge is a square and a template.

24. For Giorgione's "Giudizio di Salomone" see Pignatti (note 1 above), fig. 34, pp. 58, 98. Lionello Puppi ("Giorgione e l'architettura," in *Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano*,

ed. R. Pallucchini (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1981), p. 354, recognizes "i riferimenti espliciti dell' ambientazione necessaria, cioè il cuore santo di Gerusalemme." He agrees with Carroll Kinsky that the *Palatium Salomonis* there is actually modeled on the *Palazzo Ducale* in Venice, with some curious additions. (C. H. Krinsky. "Representation of the Temple of Jerusalem before 1500," *Journal of the warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 33 [1970], pp. 1–19).

25. L. White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology. Collected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 224.

26. For Vanoccio Biringuccio's account of early 16th-century Milan, see F. Klemmer, *A History of Western Technology*, trans. D. W. Singer (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), p. 139 [rppt. The M.I.T. Press, 1964].

27. Klemmer (note above), p. 104.

28. W. B. Parsons, *Engineering and Engineers in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1939), p. 132, fig. 58. There is a similar mill (clearly a grist mill) in *An Allegory of Love* (1527–1539) by Garofalo in the National Gallery, London (NG1362).

29. Vitruvius 10. 5. See T. K. Derry, T. I. Williams, *A Short History of Technology from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1900* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p. 250.

30. For *straniamento* (omission of canonical icons from a picture to create a riddle) see S. Settis. "Giorgione e i suoi committenti." In *Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano*, vol. I, ed. R. Palucchini (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, n.d.), pp. 390–96.

31. Ronald Knox's *Translation of the Latin Vulgate* (London: Burns & Oates, 1955) will be used for all translations of the Vulgate.

32. "The Sun is the fitting sphere for those souls whose writing and teaching shed such a splendour of philosophical illumination over the Middle Ages ... appearing now as surpassingly vivid lights, as so many suns apparent against the burning background of the Sun because more brilliant even than it." J. S. Carroll, *IN PATRIA. An Exposition of Dante's Paradiso* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), pp. 187–88. See Carroll here for the Medieval debate over Solomon's salvation (in the light of his rejection of God's commandments); also E. G. Gardner. *Dante's Ten Heavens. A Study in the Paradiso* (London: Constable, 1904), pp. 118–22. The Greek Fathers favored Solomon's case, while Augustine and the Latins opposed it. Carroll cites Lorenzetti's "Last Judgment" (Pisa, Campo Santo), in which Solomon climbs from his tomb with "his face turned towards Christ's right-hand side," and an Aquinas fresco in Santa Maria Novella in Florence which shows Solomon, alone of the scriptural writers, lacking a nimbus. Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) praises his wisdom, but condemns his folly. See also *Purgatorio*, Canto XXX, 10–12 and *Paradiso*, Canto XIII, 46–142.

33. P. H. Wicksteed trans., *The Temple Classics. Dante's Paradiso* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1965).

34. According to Jacob Burckhardt (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, English translation of the second German edition of 1868 by S. G. R. Middlemore, revised by and edited by I. Gordon [New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1960], pp. 356–63), astrology had become a “predominant feature in Italian life” (p. 356) and “not only did pious and excellent people share the delusion, but they actually came forward to profess it publicly” (p. 357). “[From] the the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, professors of this pseudo-science were appointed at the universities, side-by-side with genuine astronomers.” Even the Papacy valued it with the notable exception of Pius II (p. 357). Each religion was assigned its day (Mercury was the Christian). “Cecco d’Ascoli had already blasphemously calculated the nativity of Christ and deduced from it his death on the cross. For this he was burned at the stake in 1327 in Florence” (p. 360). Ficino defended astrology, but Pico di Mirandola argued it was “the root of all impiety and immorality” (p. 361), and he largely discredited it in Italy. “Painting, which in the fifteenth century had done its best to foster the delusion, now expressed the altered tone. Raphael (cupola of the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome) represents the symbols of the planets in the firmament, but watched and guided by beautiful angels and receiving from above the blessing of the Eternal Father” (p. 362).

35. It is here that this reading and Cohen’s seem to intersect. For the “tolerance and indifference with which the Mohammedan religion was regarded” in Renaissance Italy, see Burckhardt (note 27), pp. 347–48.