

Contemporary Mystic Christianity

Bible Self-Study Supplement

Symbolism of the Dove and the Raven

Genesis 8:6-11

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the face of the earth.

Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

And he stayed yet another seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

And the dove came in to him in the evening; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

The raven represents the evil or desire nature, the powers of which must be lifted up and transmuted into the white dove of the soul body before it can return with the olive branch, symbol of regeneration and immortality. When

Noah received the olive branch he "knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." The psychic forces had been stilled within himself, and the Ark, his soul body, could now rest at will and in peace upon Mount Ararat, the highest mount of spiritual consciousness within the Garden of Paradise. (Ararat means high and holy ground). The raven and the dove are symbols common to sacred literature. According to the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the soul of the neophyte is weighed in the balance before crossing over to the other side of life, and if found acceptable is given a white swan or dove; if wanting, a black raven. In Egypt and Greece both doves and ravens were used in marriage ceremonies as symbols of the higher and lower aspects of love, and neophytes in the Mysteries were admonished not to feed the raven. Apollo, like Noah, sent forth a raven which never returned, but alighted in a fig tree and stayed there until the figs were ripe. The fig tree, it will be remembered, is a symbol of the power of generation.

Hermes, the thrice great, uses the symbol of the tree and the raven in describing the work of human regeneration. The following words are ascribed to the Egyptian Initiate: "The earth blossoms, bringing forth divers colors and fruits, and in the midst there has grown up a great tree with silver stem and stretching to the ends of the world. On its

branches have sat many birds which have all flown away to the East and the raven's head has become white."

The olive tree is used in the sacred symbology of many countries. It is closely associated with the ministry of the Christ and is connected with the healing balm of the spirit. A decorative feature of the columns of Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome is a dove carrying an olive branch — the holy spirit with an offering of healing.

When the dove returned to the Ark after the first flight because it found nowhere a resting place, Noah kept it for seven days before sending it forth again. A sevenfold process of purification was necessary before the dove could go forth again and bring in the olive branch. When it did so Noah knew that the waters had abated. Emotions had subsided before the calm presence of a masterful soul.

It was near the end of a cycle of seven, in his six hundred and first year, that Noah disembarked. Under the powers of eleven, the number of polarity — designated as the seven and twentieth day of the second month — the land was again dry and ready to receive him, his wife and sons and their wives. Men and women in equal number there were, also bearing out symbolically the dual forces of spirit in equilibrium. With this harmonious condition as a starting point, a new world order was begun.

The three sons of Noah represent the spirit and body of man working in union by means of the link of mind. Shem means heaven; Ham, darkness; Japeth, extended or enlarged. The spirit, operating in the body, enlarges its powers through experience. This is the working trinity (the three sons) that overspread the whole of the Earth.

According to the Apocrypha, the entire planet, as the heritage of the three sons of Noah, was divided into as many parts. Since the sons represent attributes of man's nature, the part of the Earth assigned to each possesses qualities of a corresponding character. The psychic and magnetic conditions on the planet's surface are as varied as are the geographic and climatic. From its inner strata definite forces are projected into certain localities, giving to them a distinctive character particularly suitable for certain types of activity and the development of certain qualities in the life coming within their influence. These considerations guide Race Spirits in directing the migrations of their human wards into regions suited to their advancement. Hence, divine wisdom lay back of early race colonization.

— ***Corinne Heline***