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### Dove. Visual arts

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**DOI**

[10.1515/ebr.dove](https://doi.org/10.1515/ebr.dove)

**Publication date**

2013

**Published in**

Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception. - 6: Dabbesheth-Dreams and dream interpretation

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Chavannes-Mazel, C. A. (2013). Dove. Visual arts. In H-J. Klauck, V. Leppin, B. McGinn, C-L. Seow, H. Spieckermann, B. D. Walfish, & E. J. Ziolkowski (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception. - 6: Dabbesheth-Dreams and dream interpretation* (pp. 1127-1129, pl. 16b, fig. 21). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ebr.dove>

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John Kissinger

## VI. Visual Arts

The role the dove plays in the Bible is not a complex one. In the HB, it is either a sacrificial animal, or an innocent creature that was sent out by Noah to look for signs of life outside the ark, or a beautiful white animal to compare a bride with (see above). In the NT, God's spirit descends on Jesus' head in the form of a dove at his baptism by John in the desert (Luke 3:22). When illustrating these texts, the image of the dove is as easily recognizable as the text is clear.

Images become more intricate when the dove represents "a wind from God" sweeping over the face of the waters in the Creation (Gen 1:2) (Venice, San Marco, atrium; Demus 1988: pl. 40), or the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation (with triumphal arch, 5th century, Sta Maria Maggiore, Rome, as one of the oldest examples) and at Pentecost (Rabula Codex made in Syria in 586 CE; see also fig. 21). As part of the Trinity in numerous pictures of the *Hetoimasia* (Gk. ἑτοιμασία) and *Seats of Mercy*, the dove's visual presence is the most long-lived. In all these instances, the dove can be understood as representing the Holy Spirit, wearing a cross nimbus around its little head. A rare illustration of Matt 10:16, in which Jesus tells the apostles to be innocent as doves, can be found in the apse mosaic of San Clemente in Rome, dating from ca. 1125 (see → plate 16.b). In its center, the dead body of Jesus is surrounded by twelve white doves, inserted within the dark cross that is placed against a magnificent golden background (Dodwell: pl. 132).

A symbolic or extra meaning of the dove appears from early Christian times. The image of a dove carrying an olive branch, sometimes accompanied by the words "*in pace*" (in peace) is a sepulchral theme from the 4th century onwards (Poeschke). Doves drink from shallow chalices in mosaics in Ravenna (Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, 5th cent.), symbolizing a heavenly place. Next to the faithful soul, the dove stands for God's inspiration. For instance, at the beginning of Ps 1 in the Psalter of St. Albans from the 12th century (Geddes: color fig. 61), David, crowned, is seated on a bench with the dove of the Holy Ghost touching his ear; he plays harp and holds an open scroll with the inscription "ANNUNTIATIONEM SANCTI SPIRITUS ERUCTAVIT BEATUS DAVID PSALMISTA QUEM DEUS ELEGIT." St. Gregory, too, wrote his Homilies on Ezekiel inspired by a dove, as is recounted by his secretary Petrus Diaconus who watched him through a hole in a curtain (Petrus Diaconus, *Vita S. Gregorii* 27). The same divine inspiration hovers over many images of the Tree of Jesse (e.g., Huth Psalter, London BL Add MS 38116 f 14v; Cîteaux



Fig. 21 Pentecost

Lectionary, Dijon Bibliothèque Municipale MS 641 fol. 40v; see Dodwell: 93, 176 and fig. 204).

The dove's most complicated role involves representing the seven gifts of the Lord in Isa 11:2. In combining Isaiah's seven gifts with the first sentence of Prov 9:1 ("Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars"), Christian theologians bestowed the gifts upon the seven pillars of the temple of wisdom, and, by doing so, transformed the Hebrew temple into the Christian church with the *spiritus sapientiae et intellectus* (Wisdom and Understanding), *spiritus concilii et fortitudinis* (Council and Fortitude), *spiritus scientiae et pietatis* (Knowledge and Piety) and the *spiritus timoris Domini* (Fear of the Lord), resting upon her. Its dogmatic significance is best summarized in the glass windows of Saint Denis of ca. 1140, for which Abbot Suger furnished both the subjects and the inscriptions. The famous windows in Chartres (ca. 1145) and Canterbury (ca. 1200) closely follow their iconography (Mâle: 165–72).

Today, the dove is best known as a secular symbol. Pablo Picasso's lithograph *La Colombe* (dated January 1949, a.o. London, Tate Britain P 1366), a realistic picture of a white pigeon without an olive branch, was chosen as the emblem for the World Peace Congress in Paris in 1949. The dove became a symbol for the peace movement and was used in Communist demonstrations of the period. At the 1950 World Peace Congress in Sheffield, Picasso made a brief speech recounting how his father had taught him to paint doves. He concluded: "I stand for life against death; I stand for peace against war." At the 1952 World Peace Congress in Berlin, Picasso's *Dove* was depicted in a banner above the

stage. Anti-communists had their own take on the peace dove: the group *Paix et Liberté* distributed posters titled *La colombe qui fait BOUM* (the dove that goes BOOM), showing the peace dove metamorphosing into a Soviet tank (a copy of this poster is in the Seeley G. Mudd Library in Appleton, Wisconsin).

Recently, in 2009, the Cuban installation and performance artist Tania Bruguera made a performance related to the historical moment, when a dove came to sit on Fidel Castro's shoulder as he was delivering a speech in Havana on January 9, 1959 (Posner: 23–25, 108–11). At this particular moment, the dove's meaning of peace, Christian soul, and communistic propaganda came together for once.

Finally, the dove as a symbol of devotion, peace, and blessing is one of the more popular decorative motifs on cemetery monuments, and doves are constant symbols of peace and contentedness in Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs.

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Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel

## VII. Music

Various applications of the biblical symbol of the dove are present in Western music history. As a symbol of love, in particular characterizing the relation between God and man, it is taken up in the numerous works interpreting the Song of Songs (2:14 and 5:2, "my dove"; 4:1 and 5:12, the dove's eyes); e.g., in Palestrina's setting of the Song of Songs in his *Fourth Book of Motets* (1584), nos. 7, 16, and 20; in Adrian Banchieri's *Nuovi pensieri ecclesiastici libro III* from 1613 (4th and 5th concertos); Henrich Schütz's *Symphoniae Sacrae* (1629) in nos. 10 and 11; and in J.S. Bach's cantata 49 *Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen* from 1726 (no. 2).

As a symbol of peace relating to the story of Noah in Gen 8: 8–12, it is applied in the arioso *Am Abend da es kühle war* (no. 64) in J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* (1727) reflecting the reconciliation accomplished by Christ on the cross. The dove motif from the Noah story is also taken up in Benjamin Britten's opera *Noye's Fludde*, op. 59 (1957), based on a play from the *Chester Mystery cycle* (preserved from ca. 1600) where a representation is given of Noah, who sends out a dove that returns with an olive leaf thus proclaiming the end of the flood.

As a symbol of the Holy Spirit it appears for instance in J.S. Bach's cantata 7 *Christ unser Herr zum*

*Jordan kam* (1724) in no. 4, referring to Matt 3:16 / John 1:32. It is also present in Stravinsky's anthem *The Dove Descending* for chorus a capella (1962) to a text from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (4th section, *Little Gidding*). The flute solo accompanying the passage on the Holy Spirit in the *Et Incarnatus* section of the credo in Beethoven's *Missa solennis* (1827) may be perceived as a musical realization of the dove symbol.

Sven Rune Havsteen

## VIII. Film

The white dove is generally represented as a heavenly emissary and a symbol of peace, innocence, and purity. These characteristics of the dove have become an inexhaustible source of similes and metaphors, and they provide a continuous supply of artistic inspiration. In movies with religious themes, the dove represents the presence of the Holy Spirit, based on the manifestation of the dove on the occasion of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist when the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended on Christ in the form of a dove.

Because of the docile nature of the dove as a gentle and quiet bird, the dove has appeared in the titles of many movies and television programs, including *The Dove* (dir. Roland West, 1927), *Kalapatting Puti* (dir. Guillermo J. Icasiano, 1938, *White dove*), the TV miniseries *Lonesome Dove* (dir. Simon Wincer, 1989), and *The Wings of the Dove* (dir. Iain Softley, 1997). The symbol of the dove and its connection with innocence (and loss thereof) is so obvious to viewers that it can be used in parody, as is the case with *De Däwa* (dirs. George Coe/Anthony Lover, 1968), a hilarious take on Ingmar Bergman.

Doves also appear to make political statements. Duki Dror, an Israeli director, directed *Raging Dove* (Hebrew: *Ha-Shakhen shel Yeshu*; 2002), a documentary detailing the story of Johar Abu Lashin. Lashin was a Palestinian and an Israeli citizen who hoped to make a difference in the Arab-Israeli strife through the power of sport. *Little White Dove* (Spanish: *Palomita Blanca*) is a 1973 Chilean film directed by Raúl Ruiz. The film was censored by the military dictatorship of Chile because of its political nature. *Eyes Without a Face* (dir. Georges Franju, 1960, *Les yeux sans visage*) shows the character Christiane releasing the doves her father used for his medical experiments.

The flying dove often represents the soul of a person ascending to heaven after death. *Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982) is a film about a "replicant," a genetically engineered robot named Roy, who desires to have his life span extended. Unable to attain an extension of his life, Roy dies of natural causes. After his death a dove flies away, symbolizing Roy's soul departing his body. *The Killer* is a 1989 film directed and written by John Woo. In the movie, starring Chow Yun-Fat, John Woo uses doves