

# TWO MEDIAEVAL CISTERCIANS SING THE VIRTUES OF THE TURTLE-DOVE

**‘Holy love and holy fear are like the two eyes of the dove in the Canticle, for the dove is of all birds the most timorous and the most loving.’**

—Hélinand of Froidmont (ca. 1160–after 1229) in *The School of Self-Knowledge: A Symposium from Mediaeval Sources* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1956), chap. 2 (drawn from his *Liber de cognitione sui*).

**‘The voice of this little bird [i.e., the turtle-dove] is more of a moan than a song, and thus reminds us that we are but pilgrims on the earth and have here no continuing city. So when a holy soul sighs for the presence of Christ, grieving that the coming of the Kingdom is so long delayed, and hailing from afar its longed-for fatherland with plaints and sighs, do you not think that such a soul is like the turtle-dove, that chaste and mournful bird?’**

—*Saint Bernard* (1090 or 91–1153, Abbot of Clairvaux and Doctor of the Church) *on the Song of Songs* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1952), chap. 27.1.

**‘The turtle-dove has something else to recommend it, besides its plaintive voice. It is a chaste bird, content with one mate and living in solitary widowhood, if that mate dies; therefore its voice may be regarded as enjoining chastity.’**

—*On the Song of Songs*, chap. 27.2.

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