



Rainbow

After the Deluge the hope grew into faith that no such or similar destruction would again come to decimate mankind. The story is told that the Lord made a covenant with Noah, and the following were the terms of the covenant:

Then God said to Noah. . . . “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” [\(1\)](#)

As a visible sign of the obligation not to repeat the catastrophe, a colorful rainbow appeared for the first time after the Deluge—it was a new and till then unknown atmospheric phenomenon. In this colored refraction of sunlight in small and suspended drops of water the rescued believed to see the divine promise not to repeat the flood:

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring the clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant.” [\(2\)](#)

The covenant, according to the moral conception of the Hebrews, was a reciprocal deed. It was kept only in its promise not to bring a paramount flood upon the Earth: the Earth and man continued to be shaped and reshaped in further catastrophes before the close of the age of creation that is the theme of the Book of Genesis.

References

1. Genesis IX. 8-11.
2. Genesis IX. 12-15. [According to Genesis II. 5-6 no rain fell on the newly created earth, which was watered only by a mist ascending from the ground and falling as dew. If this phenomenon persisted until the Deluge this would explain the novelty of the rainbow after the catastrophe.]

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, the Spanish conquistador who traveled in the Andes in the sixteenth century, recorded in his *Historia de los Incas* a tale about Manco Capac, the first Inca, which has a curious resemblance to the Biblical story. Emerging from a cave after the re-appearance of the sun, Manco Capac and his brothers “arrived at the mountain which is two leagues, approximately, from the town of Cuzco, and climbing to the top, they saw in it the rainbow, which the natives call *guanacuari*. And, interpreting it as a favorable omen, Manco Capac said: ‘Consider this a sign that the world will not again be destroyed by water’” (“*Tened aquello por senal que no sera el mundo mas destruido por agua!*” Chapter 12). The rainbow was depicted on the altar of the Coricancha in the temple of Viracocha in Cuzco. See R. T. Zuidema, “La Imagen del Sol y la Huaca de Susurpuquio en el Sistema Astronomico de los Incas en el Cuzco,” *Journal de la Societe de Americanistes* LXIII (1974-76), p. 218. If, as Dwardu Cardona has suggested, the reference to the rainbow in

this passage is to the rings of Saturn—a suggestion with which I tend to concur—the “bondage” of Saturn in its rings may have been regarded as a guarantee of its future behavior.].

