

Earth, Wind and Fire: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Creation

Contents

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Prologu

Carol J. Dempsey, O.P., and Mary Margaret Pazdan, O.P.

Pondering the mysteries of the universe, too great to be known fully and too awesome to be comprehended in a gaze, philosophers, mystics, poets, and scientists have tried throughout the centuries to give expression to their experience of the holy, the sacred. For many of them, as for the Hebrew psalmist of old, the heavens did tell of the glory of God, and the firmament did proclaim God's handiwork. Creation did manifest God's presence. It did capture the brilliance of the divine imagination. It did speak of God's heartfelt compassion as described in Psalm 104:1-30, and it was full of the wisdom of God as the wisdom writer teaches in Proverbs 8:22-31.

The philosopher Socrates reminds us that "wisdom begins in wonder."¹ Hildegard of Bingen, like many other great mystics, was able to hold God and creation in a single thought that spilled over into profound reflection. For Hildegard,

The earth is at the same time
mother,
she is mother of all that is natural,
mother of all that is human,
She is the mother of all,
for contained in her
are the seeds of all.

The earth of humankind
contains all moistness,
all verdancy
all germinating power.