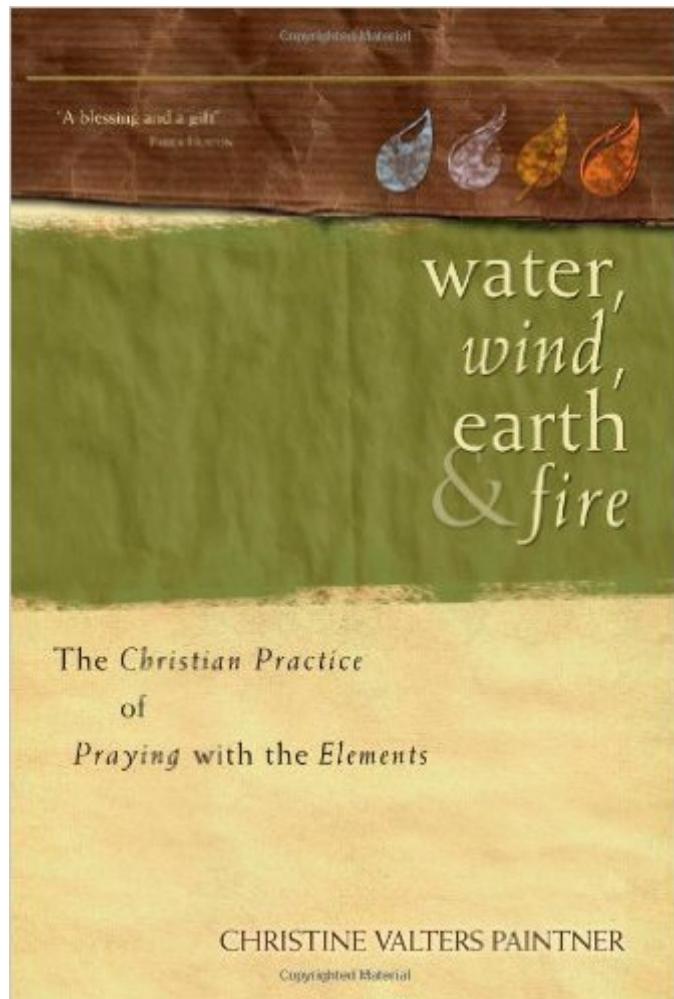


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Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice Of Praying With The Elements



Synopsis

Organized around 'The Canticle of the Creatures' by St Francis of Assisi, this book considers the ways in which praying with the natural elements can enliven Christian spiritual life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures" (also known as the "Canticle of the Sun") is a powerful and poetic evocation of God's presence in the elements of nature. But few Christians, in my experience, seem to draw the connection that if the elements are indeed agents of God's blessings and means by which we can offer blessing and worship back to God, then it might make sense to think in terms of "air prayer," "water prayer," and so forth. This is the simple yet powerful premise of this lovely new book from Christine Valter Paintner, a Benedictine Oblate and the founder of the Abbey of the Arts website which explores the connection between spirituality and creativity. Some readers may wonder if this is a crypto-Wiccan book, and indeed anyone interested in creative cross-fertilization between Neopaganism and Christian spirituality will find much to explore in this book. But let's be clear: the four elements (air, fire, water and earth) are universal energies, since they are grounded not only in the nature of the earth, but indeed in our very bodies (think of it: your skeleton and flesh are earth, your blood is water, your lungs and breath bring you air, and the very heat your body generates is the fire within you). Historically speaking, knowledge of the four elements and exploration of their spiritual meaning can be traced back to Greece, where Plato speaks of the elements, following the earlier

Sicilian philosopher Empedocles. In other words, our earliest knowledge of the elements is not occult or magical, but rather philosophical and scientific, in scope.

In her book *Water, Wind, Earth and Fire*, author and contemplative artist Christine Valters Paintner explores the four natural elements named in the title and traditionally associated with ancient philosophies and nature-based religions. Paintner examines each element in turn as a metaphor for the myriad ways spiritual seekers can learn to connect with the divine matrix and unfathomable mysteries which fill the earth we walk upon. Hence, this book is primarily about learning to see. Within its pages we are offered new ways of looking at the world. Instead of seeing only the superficial and obvious, Paintner teaches us to look lovingly into the depths of a shimmering world which is constantly shifting and changing. The rhythms and cycles of nature are a recurring theme throughout this book. Indeed, a major component of the contemplative work in which Paintner engages incorporates a deep resonance and response to these ever-changing rhythms--the cycles of our days and nights, weeks and months, seasons, and even our very breaths. In this way, the author shares her understanding of a world filled with the rising and falling of a never-ending, eternal dance of love and loss, pain and pleasure, desire and absence--both poles pointing to the dynamic tensions which underlie our daily existence, including that between our inner spiritual journey and the outer landscapes we inhabit. She teaches us to read the natural world as a sacred text which, if we learn to discern its subtle movements, may reveal itself to us as the source of Divine Mystery. While her interpretive lens is primarily Christian based, its roots lie deeper than any single tradition.

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