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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ALL ABOUT THE RAINBOW

Philosophers of long ago explained atmospheric phenomena just as confidently - if not so successfully - as any meteorologist does today. There is a fourteenth century translation of a thirteenth century explanation, by Bartholomew Anglicus, of the rainbow:

"The Rainbow is impression-gendered in an hollow cloud and dewy, disposed to rain in endless many gutters, as it were shining in a mirror, and is shapen as a bow, and sheweth divers colours, and is gendered by the beams of the sun or of the moon. And is but seldom gendered by beams of the moon, no more but twice in fifty years, as Aristotle saith. In the rainbow by cause of its clearness be seen divers forms, kinds and shapes that be contrary. Therefore the bow seemeth coloured, for, as Bede saith, it taketh colour of the four elements. For therein, as it were in any mirror, shineth figures and shapes and kinds of elements. For of fire he taketh red colour in the overmost part, and of earth green in the nethermost, and of the air a manner of brown colour, and of water some deal blue in the middle... As Bede saith and the master <sup>of</sup> /stories, forty years tofore the doom, the rainbow shall not be seen, and that shall be token of drying, and of default of elements."

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