

**STUDIES IN  
CHURCH HISTORY**

**VOLUME 46**

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**GOD'S BOUNTY?  
THE CHURCHES AND THE  
NATURAL WORLD**

**EDITED BY PETER CLARKE  
and TONY CLAYDON**

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**For the Ecclesiastical History Society  
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and the Natural World**

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Since its beginnings the Christian Church has had an ambivalent relationship with the natural world: on the one hand Christians responded positively to the beauty of nature as the work of divine creation, and on the other they also feared nature as a source of danger. In both cases nature was seen as an instrument of divine providence.

Further, the tension between faith and reason has been a constant concern in Christian approaches to nature, and theologians since Augustine have sought to resolve this. In the wake of the Scientific Revolution the challenges to religious explanations of the world increased dramatically, notably with the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution. But although science has often put Christianity on the defensive, it has also provoked theological reflection, especially on human stewardship of nature, as man's impact on the environment has become more apparent.

Christianity has long sought to learn from nature as a 'book', full of examples to illustrate religious teaching and signs of divine and saintly interventions in human history. Some Christians have even tried to live in harmony with nature in utopian communities. This volume bears witness to lively scholarly debate on these and other aspects of its theme, and covers a wide chronological, geographical and thematic range stretching from missionary encounters with the New Worlds of Australia and Latin America to popular and learned responses towards nature in early modern Italy and Hungary.

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THE 2009 WINTER MEETING OF  
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EDITED BY

PETER CLARKE

and

TONY CLAYDON

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