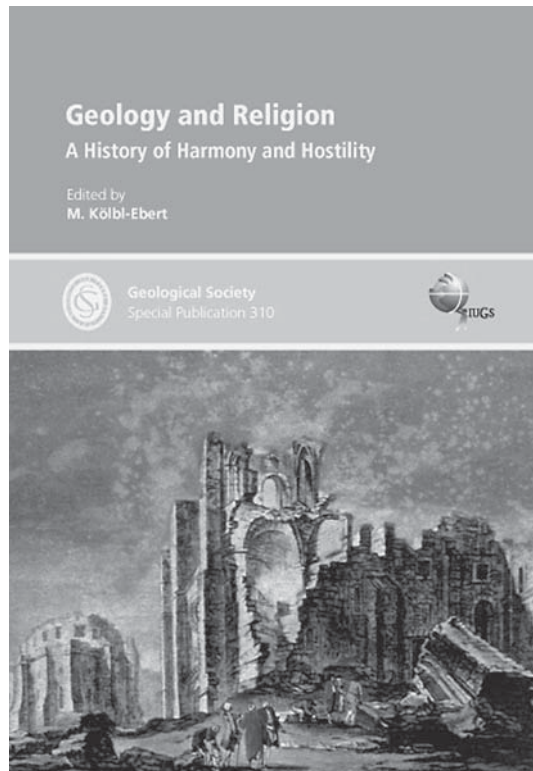


Geology and Religion. A History of Harmony and Hostility, edited by M. Kölbl-Ebert, 2009. Geological Society Special Publication 310. The Geological Society of London, The Geological Society Publishing House, Unit 7, Brassmill Enterprise Centre, Brassmill Lane, Bath, BA1 3JN, United Kingdom (order through: <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/bookshop;jsessionid=98EFF0CB95707F3DAE47EDDA945B4D00>). Hardback, 368 pages. Price GBP 95.00; USD 190.00 (fellow price GBP 47.50, USD 95.00; corporate affiliates price GBP 76.00; other societies' price GBP 57.00; USD 114.00). ISBN 978-1-86239-269-4.



The thirty-two papers collected in this book have been presented at the annual conference of the International Commission on the History of Geological Sciences (INHIGEO) in Eichstätt (Germany) in July August 2007 and have now been bundled. The contents are grouped into the following eight sections: Introduction; From mythological approaches towards the European Enlightenment (including Inca cosmogony and pre-Meiji Japanese thinking); The Flood and the age of the Earth; Geology within “religious” organisations (including Communist China); Geological clerics and Christian Geologists; Evolution; History of Creationism; and Theology and Creationism. The editor, Kölbl Ebert, grouped the various papers differently in her introduction, however, where she recognises three more general sections:

Mythical approaches to independent geological expertise; Geology and religion drifting apart; and Creationism. Both subdivisions of the book are arbitrary; several other subdivisions would have been possible with so wide a range of topic and themes that are discussed. However, it serves the purpose of presenting a “line of commonality” between the wide spectre of topics.

Kölbl-Ebert emphasises that geology and religion have evolved through time, often intimately intertwined and mutually influencing one another. Considering both domains independently may, consequently, be a challenge for historians of science. Editing this book must also have been a “tour de force”, but this task was well executed in the surprisingly short time between August 2007 and March 2009.

What fascinated me in particular was the glimpse thrown on exotic areas of activity and ways of thinking for instance in ‘the Peru of the Incas, in pre-Meiji Japan, and in Mao Zedong’s communist China. These are topics that are not commonly broached by western geologists. Also revealing are the contrasting proto-geological approaches in various parts of 17th to 18th century Europe, ultimately converging in a series of philosophies and schools of thinking in 19th century Europe, but also in Australia and North and South America. Evolution, starting with some proto-geological thinking, and fully blossoming in the publications of Darwin, subsequently resulted in various Christian attitudes towards “the problem of Genesis and geology. This is illustrated from various points of view. The topics of “Creationism” and “Intelligent Design” that gain worldwide attention nowadays are clearly presented from various angles in several chapters.

In short, a fascinating book with provocative contributions on unusual topics that have

a bearing on the development of the science geology. The book is warmly recommended to all natural scientist interested in history, and

in particular to geologists that want to widen their outlook on their chosen profession.

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