



The Spiritual Journal of Henry David Thoreau

Malcolm Clemens Young

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This title explores the religious nature of "Thoreau's Journal". Most people who care about nature cannot help but use religious language to describe their experience of it. We can trace many of these conceptions of nature and holiness directly to influential nineteenth-century writers, especially Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). In Walden, he writes that 'God himself culminates in the present moment', and that in nature we encounter, 'the workman whose work we are'. But what were the sources of his religious convictions about the meaning of nature in human life? As the most comprehensive study of Thoreau's spirituality from a Christian perspective, "The Spiritual Journal of Henry David Thoreau" is the first to seriously examine connections between Thoreau's religious practices and those of his Protestant forebears. While a few writers have considered the relation between Thoreau's thought and Christian doctrine, this book instead outlines the links between Thoreau's religious practices (such as keeping a spiritual journal, studying nature, and walking) and those of earlier New England Protestants. This work is also the first study to compare his journal with the spiritual journals of prominent Puritans, Anglicans, Methodists, and Quakers. It is also one of the first books to treat spiritual journals as a distinct literary genre, while comparing theological expectations of nature ranging from the American Puritan Jonathan Edwards to nineteenth-century Romantic walkers and Thoreau's fellow Transcendentalists.

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