



The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland

Alexandra Walsham

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The Reformation of the Landscape is a richly detailed and original study of the relationship between the landscape of Britain and Ireland and the tumultuous religious changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It explores how the profound theological and liturgical transformations that marked the era between 1500 and 1750 both shaped, and were in turn shaped by, the places and spaces within the physical environment in which they occurred. Moving beyond churches, cathedrals, and monasteries, it investigates how the Protestant and Catholic Reformations affected perceptions and practices associated with trees, woods, springs, rocks, mountain peaks, prehistoric monuments, and other distinctive topographical features of the British Isles. Drawing on extensive research and embracing insights from a range of disciplines, Alexandra Walsham examines the origins, immediate consequences, and later repercussions of these movements of religious renewal, together with the complex but decisive modifications of belief and behaviour to which they gave rise.

It demonstrates how ecclesiastical developments intersected with other intellectual and cultural trends, including the growth of antiquarianism and the spread of the artistic and architectural Renaissance, the emergence of empirical science and shifting fashions within the spheres of medicine and healing. Set within a chronological framework that stretches backwards towards the early Middle Ages and forwards into the nineteenth century, the book assesses the critical part played by the landscape in forging confessional identities and in reconfiguring collective and social memory. It illuminates the ways in which the visible world was understood and employed by the diverse religious communities that occupied the British Isles, and shows how it became a battleground in which bitter struggles about the significance of the Christian and pagan past were waged.

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