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Epiphanies, Metaphors, and Liminality: Religion and Mountains in the Seventeenth Century English Mind

Ethan Smith

Fort Hays State University, esmith@sterlingcollege.edu

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Epiphanies, Metaphors, and Liminality:
Religion and Mountains in the
Seventeenth Century English Mind

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of
Fort Hays State University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

by

Ethan C. Smith

M.A.E., University of California, Santa Cruz

B.A., Sterling College

Date: 04/26/2005

Approved *Jodi A. Winchester*

Major Professor

Approved *[Signature]*

Dean, Graduate School

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the relationship between religion and mountains as represented in seventeenth century English thought. In particular, it seeks to discover trends of continuity in connections between divinity and mountains. It demonstrates that at least two distinct trends of continuity exist. First, between mountains and divinity as represented by metaphor and allegory, both represented in a variety of mediums, from poetry to letters and books. And secondly, it demonstrates continuity with regards to mountain experiences, which often evoke religion, either as a religious experience, experiences that use religious language, or experiences to religious places. In charting these continuities, it then seeks to argue that mountains can be seen as liminal spaces that mediate between various features of culture, such as civilization and barbarity, humans and nature, and the divine and the human. This feature of liminality has implications for the relationship between humans and mountains more broadly.

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INTRODUCTION: THE GENEALOGY AND THE ARGUMENT

In October of 1872, near the end of what the British would consider the “Golden Age” of alpinism, a young Scottish-born American immigrant scrambled to the top of Mt. Ritter in California’s Sierra Nevada, seemingly the first known European to make the climb. He described his ascent afterward in painstaking detail:

At length, I found myself at the foot of a sheer drop in the bed of the avalanche channel, which seemed to bar all further progress. The tried dangers beneath seemed even greater than that of the cliff in front; therefore, after scanning its face again and again, I commenced to scale it, picking my holds with intense caution. After gaining a point about half-way to the top, I was brought to a dead stop, with arms outspread, clinging close to the face of the rock, unable to move hand or foot either up or down. My doom appeared fixed. I must fall. There would be a moment of bewilderment, and then a lifeless tumble down the once general precipice to the glacier below. When this final danger flashed in upon me, I became nerve-shaken for the first time since setting foot on the mountain, and my mind seemed to fill with a stifling smoke. But the terrible eclipse lasted only a moment, when life burst forth again with preternatural clearness. I seemed suddenly to become possessed of a new sense. The other self -- the ghost of by-gone experiences, instinct, or Guardian Angel -- call it what you will -- came forward and assumed control. Then my trembling muscles became firm again, every rift and flaw was seen as through a microscope, and my limbs moved with a positiveness and precision with which I seemed to have nothing at all to do. Had I been borne aloft upon wings, my deliverance could not have been more complete. Above this memorable spot, the face of the mountain is still more savagely hacked and torn. But the strange influx of strength I had received seemed inexhaustible. I found a way without effort and soon stood upon the topmost crag in the blessed light.¹

The gripping fervor that entranced John Muir filled him with terror and delight.

Muir was neither the first European to climb a mountain nor was he the first to revel in its majesty and magnificence in the face of such terror. Even though today many consider him to be the father of America’s National Parks and a literary figure of note, the experience of rapture that Muir witnessed upon Mt. Ritter – and countless other times

¹ John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: Century Co, 1898), 58-60.

across the US and Alaska, from Mt. Rainier's glacial summits to riding to top of a Douglas Fir tree in a thunderstorm – was not novel to either the world of mountaineering or to many who ventured into mountainous landscapes. In fact, this idea, a witnessing of what Muir's contemporaries and later scholars would call the Sublime, has a long history.

One aspect of this history, as described by Marjorie Hope Nicolson, who coined the term the “Aesthetics of the Infinite” to describe the earliest form of the Sublime she could identify, is religiosity. In all of the key figures Nicolson identifies, and in many more since, divinity has been associated with high places. Since Sublimity pertains to greatness, vastness, and that which is both beautiful and terrifying, the association of this feeling with the infinite divine is easy to consider. For Nicolson, John Dennis, the literary critic, exemplified this feeling the most. Dennis crossed the Alps in 1688 on a Grand Tour, and while there he witnessed the “delightful Horror” for which he is well known. But also while there, Dennis drew upon a long tradition of human experience of mountains: that of connecting the divine with high places, notably mountains and hills. For Nicolson, she considered Dennis's experience to be unique, stating that “the true source of the Sublime, for Dennis, was in religion.”² But the notion of an association of high places with divinity and religiosity has much deeper roots.

In fact, Dennis's experience in the Alps, which made use of an evolving language to describe divinity's connection with mountains, only began to change how divinity was discussed in relation with mountains, moving as it did toward an “intellectualization” of mountains in the minds of the educated elite.³ Dennis's actual alpine experience and

² Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (New York: Norton, 1959), 281.

³ Robert J. Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture 1660-1800: Samuel Johnson and Languages of Natural Description* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 43. Mayhew uses the term

subsequent writings, as I will demonstrate below, have far deeper roots, and are intimately connected to a long tradition of continuity of thought across the seventeenth century in Britain and British thought. It is this tradition that I will be tracing through the seventeenth century in this essay. By traversing a range of thought in the seventeenth century, I will demonstrate strong continuity and diversity in British thought between mountains, divinity, and religiosity.

Beginning any study of mountains and sublimity in the early modern world – or frankly any time period before the Romantics – a scholar must approach what Dawn Hollis and Jason König have called “a very long-standing but misleading perception which still casts its shadow over academic and especially popular writing on mountain history.”⁴ This immense shadow emanates from Marjorie Hope Nicolson, whose notions of Sublimity and the “Aesthetic of the Infinite” played a major role in shaping fledgling fields such as Ecocritical studies and the Environmental Humanities, and her influence is also one which continues to cast a large shadow on the historiography of mountains more generally. Nicolson was known first and foremost as a literary scholar, but her scholarship transcended boundaries in a time period where this was less common. A member of the American Philosophical Society, she was a leading scholar on the Early Modern period that interpreted the scientific writings of the time as literary artifacts, a methodology ahead of its time. While the “Aesthetics of the Infinite” has received its

“intellectualizing” to describe what is happening to the English landscape during the Early Modern period. It seems an apt way of describing what happens toward the end of the era, which I will demonstrate with his work later.

⁴ Dawn Hollis and Jason König, *Mountain Dialogues From Antiquity to Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 2. Hollis and König’s work is an edited volume that collectively focuses on overcoming the shadow cast by the gloom and glory dichotomy. They argue that this idea has limited mountain studies and scholarship more broadly, especially in the Early Modern period. This thesis agrees with this statement and can be seen as contributing alongside their work. See Hollis and König Introduction for a more thorough explanation of their critique of gloom and glory.

well-proportioned dose of praise, it is not often the historical footprint for which Nicolson's work, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite*, is best known for; on the contrary, it is the dichotomy presented in the surtitle of the work that continues to influence scholarship of mountain perspectives. This dichotomy argued that before the eighteenth century, Englishmen viewed the mountains with an aesthetic "gloom." Mountains were considered to be ugly warts, terrifying places, or generally aesthetically displeasing. Only after the integration of science with religious fervor at the end of the century, posited Nicolson, did this trend begin to change and men began to wake up from their slumber to see the "glory" of mountains.⁵ Nicolson's argument is an aesthetic one, for she was a historian of taste. Thus, while remaining deeply indebted to Nicolson and building closely off of her notion of a religious sublime, this thesis will take a critical approach to this dichotomy to uncover more nuance and complexity in the religious connections between people and mountains than the gloom and glory dichotomy allows for. It will reiterate, indirectly, the point that historian Janice Koelb articulated in her work on the subject which was that, "the facts ultimately will not allow so simple a framework to stand."⁶

Written in the late 1950s, Marjorie Hope Nicolson's work was certainly ahead of its time in many regards. In others, it was a direct product of the various trends of historical writing in the United States during the decade. As the first woman to attain a

⁵ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 3. Nicolson's argument is stated most strongly in her introduction. On this particular page, she states it simply but clearly, noting that prior to the seventeenth century, men's eyes were "so clouded" that "never for a moment did poets see mountains in the full radiance to which our eyes have become accustomed" and that only after the Scientific Revolution did mountain glory have a chance to shine "full splendor." It is important to note here the strong aesthetic feelings Nicolson pulls on from the poets. This thesis will move beyond just these aesthetic views to attempt to examine religious ones as well, noting that both are intimately connected.

⁶ Janice Hewlett Koelb, "This Most Beautiful and Adorn'd World": Nicolson's "Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory" Reconsidered," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 16, no. 3, (Summer 2009): 443-468.

full professorship at an Ivy League college, Nicolson's work has received its fair dose of renown. Her ideas have had an impact even to this day, reflected most clearly in her prominent work on mountain gloom and glory. This work has had such a tremendous impact that it often goes without a footnote, nearly assuming the level of mere fact.⁷ Nicolson's work is crucial in tracing the origin and development of the Sublime. Her notion that Dennis experienced a religious Sublime is one of the features that led to this work's creation, sparking as it did the question of whether these religious roots could be much deeper. On the contrary, her notion of a strict division between gloom and glory, as exemplified by claims such as the following are those which I will argue beyond:

It is surprising that critics have made so little effort to account for one of the most curious paradoxes in the history of literature: that mountains, upon which modern poets have lavished their most extravagant rhetoric, were for centuries described when they were described at all- at best in conventional and unexciting imagery, at worst in terms of distaste and repulsion.⁸

In these claims, Nicolson hoped to demonstrate the discovery she had uncovered in the writings of the natural philosophers of the seventeenth century, together with the poets, to bring to the surface the enlightenment that occurred in the century, finding that, "Sometime in the eighteenth century the English discovered a new world" and likening them to "cosmic voyagers" in this journey.⁹ Indeed, Nicolson's work itself reads like a mountain journey, beginning with the depths of the literary inheritance from Rome, Greece, and the Hebrews, climbing onward through the early English Poets and sonnets, even Shakespeare, noting glimpses of the fervor that would enrapture the eighteenth

⁷ Hollis and Konig, *Mountain Dialogues*, 2. The authors argue that the idea has not just been accepted, it has not even been argued against and it has attained the status of 'fact.' As recently as 2006, popular histories published related to the subject take this same notion for granted. This thesis will note consider it mere fact. See for instance Robert MacFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: Adventures in Reaching the Summit* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

⁸ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 17.

⁹ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 32.

century poets atop the mountains. Climbing as it does from these low points, its first point of interest, a lookout so to speak, is found in Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist whose ideas “sent his ecstatic soul to rove and range and be filled with the ‘astonishment,’ ‘amazement,’ ‘rapture’” and more in his poetry.¹⁰ Finally, then, we discover the first view of the true summit, with an exploration of Thomas Burnet, whose pivotal work *A Sacred Theory of the Earth* engaged in an explosive controversy that forever changed English thought, influencing as it did the subsequent generation of poets who flocked to the mountains to discover the bliss of the creator. Nicolson’s story told a grand tale. This was perhaps because the biggest flaw of the work was that she identified at the outset a problem she wished to solve, looking everywhere for this in the past as she went. What I will do instead is seek to let each document speak for itself, identifying continuity amongst these documents and placing each in its relevant context, rather than seeking to explain a contemporary phenomenon. At the end of my argument, I will make connections to broader themes and implications. And throughout, though I will make an argument with a contemporary linguistic device, I offer it as only one possible explanation for the phenomena, patterns, and ideas present in the thinkers given here.

The Argument: Its Structure, Purpose, and Limitations

Building on Nicolson and others I will seek to identify in seventeenth England notions of continuity, change, and complexity as they pertain to mountains and religion, specifically associations with divinity, but I will also discuss religiosity more generally, in addition to an emphasis on religious experiences, experiences that evoke religion, and both real and imagined places of the mind that have religious associations. In this way, my argument is novel and moves alongside and beyond Nicolson, whose works focus

¹⁰ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 137.

only on aesthetics. A historian of taste, Nicolson sought answers to how men saw mountains aesthetically; in a related but alternative way, this work identifies connections between how men saw mountains religiously. In this sub-topic, though, I will not focus only theological controversies of importance, such as that of Thomas Burnet which Nicolson and Hollis make the centerpiece of their arguments, though I will draw upon and connect to these insights. Rather, I will argue for three interrelated claims as they pertain to mountains and religion in English thought during the seventeenth century. First, I will demonstrate that strong associations between mountains and divinity exist in English thought, at least through many works of poetry, written travel guides, letters, and other written materials. Written material will be the primary means of exploring this, though some secondary sources referenced here draw upon the work of archaeologists. Secondly, I will demonstrate how this association between religion and divinity has strong continuity over time, even though a diversity of associations exists. This continuity can be classified in a few ways, though two important trends emerge. The first is the representation of divinity and mountains using metaphor and allegory. This tradition likely stretches directly back much farther, but for my purposes, I am examining it with detail in this century only. The second is the association of experiences of, with, around, and about mountains with religion, specifically with direct references to divinity and related concepts, such as heaven. Demonstrating this continuity places me firmly into two historiographic traditions or trends: the first is arguing, indirectly, against Nicolson's overly simplified dichotomy of "gloom-glory," though I do not focus directly on the aesthetics. Next, I center my writing on the recent scholarship of both the Long Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, which argue for continuity throughout the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this way, I hope to avoid oversimplification of themes, such as the “march to modernity” and the “inevitable triumph of Protestantism,” favoring instead a more nuanced approach that “remains largely committed to a sense of continuity pervading the English Reformation” as it forms the context of this writing. This will allow readers to view any changes here as part of a “gradual and incremental process rather than a momentous event” of any kind.¹¹

The third line of my argument is deeply indebted to Janice Hewlett Koelb whose essay about Jerome and Saint Francis, argues for a cultural understanding of mountains as spaces that “mediate between” various aspects of culture, such as notions of nature and culture, the divine and human, and civilization and barbarism, is essential to understanding Jerome and Saint Francis.¹² For my purposes, I will build off of Koelb but I will offer different explanations for a related conclusion. I will argue that because of rich associations of mountains and divinity in seventeenth century English thought, mountains can be viewed as liminal spaces, sometimes in the minds of those writing at the time or at times through interpreting their speech and actions. These liminal spaces for seventeenth century English writers and travelers will serve to mediate between their own perspectives of civilization with that of oddities and perhaps even barbarism. Likewise, mountains can be seen as mediators between the divine and human, sometimes through experience and sometimes merely through allegory in poetry. It is important to note that this claim will not seek to generalize toward some grand theory, but viewing mountains as liminal spaces in this way does offer a convincing explanation of the

¹¹ Lucy Bates, “The Limits of Possibility in England’s Long Reformation,” *The Historical Journal* 53, No. 4, (December 2010): 1049-1070.

¹² Janice Hewlett Koelb, “Erudite Retreat: Jerome and Francis in the Mountains,” in Dawn Hollis and Jason Konig, *Mountain Dialogues From Antiquity to Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 109.

evidence that will also give insight into the transformations occurring throughout the century and into the eighteenth century. Additionally, this explanation offers us a tool to explain cultural interactions between humans and as specific type of environment.

To do this, I will structure my text into three parts, each connected to an English account of the crossing of the Alps. Working backward from John Dennis and his clearly religious experience in the mountains, I will trace continuity and change through accounts from John Evelyn and that of Thomas Coryat. These three sources are chosen for two reasons. First, each offers an account of a Crossing of the Alps. Secondly, they are each also nearly forty years apart chronologically. Two of them even crossed the same mountain pass, offering further chance at giving a more objective glimpse into the regions. Interspersed with these works, I will draw upon a number of additional sources, sticking mostly to journals, books, poetry, and letters. These materials are the most abundant, relevant, and useful in this investigation, and I forego other sources in favor of these first because I am keeping to cultural historical methods and secondly because I am investigating individual historical experiences. Placing each in the context of the Long Reformation of the Landscape, I will examine them in their historical context and in connection with other texts to draw conclusions about how each gives insight to broader ideas. For the purpose of this thesis, the Long Reformation of the Landscape is defined as the process of transformation that happened to the landscape of the British Isles during the Long Reformation. Like Alexandra Walsham's work, this work will reflect the idea that the political, economic, and cultural transformations of the period were reflected in the landscape itself; additionally, it will follow her also in attempting to give the landscape some form of agency in this process, as an actor in some form.

Focusing exclusively on written materials, the scope of my argument will not include art, though an even stronger connection, for a historian with that expertise, might likely be drawn to supplement or critique my argument, especially in connection with the Dutch Golden Age. Geographically, my work draws exclusively upon British travelers or those who spent significant portions of their life there, though their travels often take them elsewhere. Likewise, my argument will focus exclusively on English language and English translations of documents for a few reasons. First, I am limited in my capacity for translation. Secondly, limiting myself to an English language focus allows me to closely compare my work with Nicolson's, and it also gives a more reasonable scope for the purpose and function of this essay.

As previously mentioned, my methodology will center on three accounts of crossings of the Alps, two of which occurred in the same region, but I will also incorporate accounts of mountains in Britain. Additionally, two travelers near the end of the century also bring in perspectives from the Caucasus and mentions of Greek mountains proliferate throughout the work. Being clear about this methodological approach and selection method will allow for an examination of different types of mountains in different regions of mainland Europe. Even the notion of a "type" of mountain carries its own connotations that need investigation, which I hope my method will highlight. This method allows for a key assumption from mountain literature to come to the surface and to be critiqued as part of a larger investigation. This notion is the simple idea that, in many works of mountain literature, the notion of what constitutes a "real mountain" or one which in some manner "counts" while others would not is an overlooked assumption based on the cultural context of the historian's own thought,

rather than a product of the objects and subjects under investigation. What I mean by this is represented simply by a few examples from Nicolson, though it can be found in others. For instance, in an investigation about John Evelyn, Nicolson writes clearly about his experiences in the Apennine rangers and in the Alps, weaving together what she believed to be his perspectives connected to aesthetics. She conveniently omits any mention in her work of his adventures atop Mt. Vesuvius, however. In another example, she describes Thomas Coryat's journey as one of "limping" along, though she fails to mention any of his interest at the villages dispersed throughout Savoy. And lastly, the smaller hills and mountains of England often go unnoticed, except when mocked by Thomas Hobbes or others. A few explanations for these could exist, including a sort of selection or access bias, assuming Nicolson sought to utilize sources most relevant. However, other more subtle explanations exist, including a tendency to see some mountains as "more real" than others. This is reflected in the contemporary culture of mountaineering but can be seen historically as well, with writers focusing on the hardest, highest, or some other arbitrary measurement for what constitutes a mountain. It is important to note that this is cultural, rather than scientific, and it is related to ideas mentioned by historian Peter Hansen in relationship to first ascents and to what he calls the "Summit Position."¹³ Overall, while this is not my central argument, the notion is central to my argument insofar as it allows for more subtlety and nuance with which an historian can approach culturally constructed meanings of mountains. I will approach this exploration with the understanding that many varieties of mountains, mountain experiences, and religious experiences exist and

¹³ Peter Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering After the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 11. See Chapter 1 for the entire argument referenced here. Like Hansen, I am seeking to bring an assumption from the field to bear here and then demonstrate how it limits our historical interpretation. Further investigation into this notion in and of itself might bring the concept more fully to light. Hansen considers mountaineering and modernity as coevolutionary, which brings into question many notions of mountains from before the twenty-first century.

that, accordingly, limiting ourselves to strictly defined criteria does not, in this case at least, give due diligence to the sources.

Relatedly, being clear about another use of defined criteria is important for this thesis. For this work, I will use the terms divinity and religiosity loosely. I do this for a few reasons. First, I will use divinity loosely because I will demonstrate its definition through example rather than being explicit. Secondly, a tendency of Western scholarship is to define that which often, in the mind of the group or individual, is clearly undefinable or very difficult to define, and I will take this notion into account when addressing this definition. Religiosity will be approached similarly. Rather than assuming the reader knows the definition of each, examples of each will be given throughout to demonstrate the sheer variety of experiences, metaphors, and allegories that would not fit neatly into a defined criteria. It might be said that that which evokes religious language in the source material, in all its flavors and varieties, is what helps to guide this selection, though a broader and more inclusive reading of experience in connection with religion may yield a different conclusion, so the scope this method does have limitations.

Other items pertaining to the scope and limitation of my argument and my methods are worth mentioning here as well, in addition to my exclusion of non-English works as well as art. In this work, I will be building on the idea of a Long Reformation; however, despite this longer scope – of which my work is but a small part – it is not inclusive in other ways. Women, for instance, rarely make an appearance in the writings included here. Likewise, a focus on educated elites, on which there is the most abundant source material, are often the voices most heard. Indeed, my argument notes this limitation and will demonstrate that all explanations given refer specifically to the minds

of the educated elites. A rich field for further study would be either micro-historical or archaeological in nature and would seek to corroborate my findings with those of the lives of people *in* and *of* the mountains. It is important to note that my writers, travelers, and climbers are all transient guests in these places. However, as my discussions of liminality will demonstrate, the voices of many unheard peoples and classes will make an appearance here, but they will only be through the biased view of the passerby. Writing in this way, I am drawing directly upon scholarship in environmental history, religious history, and cultural history, with other insights drawn from the environmental humanities, religious studies, and cultural studies more broadly.

The Genealogy of the Argument: Connections and Extensions

My work will not be the first work either indebted to Nicolson or to build off of and critique her work; indeed, I very much intend to dialogue with, Nicolson and these others, as well as beyond them. Although it might be that, at least in the English language, “recent scholarly discussions of early modern mountains can be counted on one hand,” I wish to begin the count on the second hand, adding to this growing dialogue.¹⁴ In doing so, I will build directly on the recent work of editors Jason König and Dawn Hollis, whose collection, *Mountain Dialogues From Antiquity to Modernity*, has revitalized the conversation related to Nicolson’s work and is a noted and esteemed inheritor of her legacy. Their chief goals, which closely align with my own, entail overcoming the simplistic gloom-glory dichotomy, bringing nuance to understanding of mountain landscapes across the *Longue Duree*, and finding new ways of understanding mountains in cultural history. Doing so allows them to “consciously step out of the shadow of

¹⁴ Hollis and König, *Mountain Dialogues*, 4.

mountain gloom and glory.”¹⁵ This is precisely where I intend my work to be situated. In addition to this collection, scholarship on Gloom-Glory and its impact has remained sparse but fruitful in the last few decades. Four other notable works are worth mentioning here which directly build off of Nicolson.

In 2009, Janice Koelb published an article that brought Nicolson back to the forefront. In her work, Koelb argues for more complexity and nuance within Nicolson’s understanding. She takes seriously the idea that metaphors and allegories can, in fact, tell us much about how people viewed mountains, especially in the Renaissance and early modern world. Specifically, then, she argues that “that Romantic mountain-description, and more generally the emotion often figured by Romantic place-description, has other and deeper historical roots than the roots Nicolson (correctly) identifies as a response to seventeenth-century British theology and geology.”¹⁶ The first strand of my argument below, which focuses on the continuity of these metaphors and allegories, begins with a similar premise, though I will identify it with other sources. Thus, Koelb argues for a nuancing of gloom-glory as an explanatory tool, something I will continue. Likewise, my work will build up the robustness of Koelb’s claim that mountains were viewed allegorically and metaphorically, specifically as it relates to divinity and religion.

Keeping in line with the explanatory power of the gloom-glory dichotomy but seeking to build on it, two recent authors’ works detail how they believe a dichotomous shift or transformation with regards to mountain aesthetics does occur in the early modern world, but they argue for a longer time period in which that develops. Working with Latin language sources and with work geographically focused on the rest of Western

¹⁵ Hollis and Konig, *Mountain Dialogues*, 5.

¹⁶ Koelb, “Most Beautiful,” 446.

Europe, these two authors, William Barton and Martin Korenjak, build upon one of Nicolson's chief drawbacks: her sole focus on England. Rather than focusing on British thought in isolation, Barton and Korenjak contend that if one extends the view to the continent and to works written in Latin, one gains a deeper understanding of mountains for longer periods of time, stretching back to at least the end of the late Medieval period. Additionally, Korenjak's work also helps build connections between mountains and religion, a key component of my thesis, but his work only builds this in as one claim among others. One of Korenjak's basic arguments, which my whole work indirectly supports, is to argue against the notion that there were any decline in mountain interest in the seventeenth century. In this way, and to add further nuance to the discussion, Korenjak seeks to reevaluate mountains during the Early Modern Period and in doing so hopes to bring forward factors which contribute to a more complex understanding of the sympathy for mountains.¹⁷ Barton, too, focuses on religion and mountains but studies mostly the aesthetics of place, in a way directly descended from Nicolson. He moves beyond Nicolson, noting that her argument as it was situated only on the British isles, limited her greatly. But Barton's goal is much the same as Nicolson's because he seeks to understand the broad shift in aesthetic taste that occurred in the period. He affirms Nicolson's argument, though he moves the date for which this change occurred back much farther. My argument will build off of Barton and Korenjak, but I will focus on a specific aesthetic shift or change of attitudes, but rather on the associations of mountains with divinity. Likewise, keeping with recent trends in scholarship on the Long Reformation, it will argue for slow change rather than any abrupt shifts.

¹⁷ Martin Korenjak, "Why Mountains Matter: Early Modern Roots of a Modern Notion," *Renaissance Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 179-219.

The leading expert in the field of early modern mountain history today is surely Dawn Hollis. Writing in 2019, Hollis traced the origins and historiography of Nicolson's argument. She focused on demonstrating how the sources upon which Nicolson drew all utilized inadequate evidence and were often products of their own historical period and thus heavily biased. Rather, Hollis identifies what Nicolson herself makes very clear: the ideas of a shift in thought were not new when Nicolson published her book. In fact, Nicolson merely pushed the date back and identified the shift much earlier, with a focus on Thomas Burnet as a critical figure and something of a watershed moment. But Nicolson's work still remained standard reading for mountains and early modern history. Because of this, Hollis contends that the "basic concept has limited the last six decades of research into premodern mountain experiences."¹⁸ The work of Hollis seeks to overcome the limitations imposed by this dichotomy by highlighting the limitations of Nicolson's argument in relationship to the historical sources.

To build the contextual and historical and methodological backdrop of the seventeenth century more successfully, this thesis will draw closely upon the work of Alexandra Walsham, whose *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* will serve as the main source of historical contextuality that will allow examinations between religion and places. In this work, Walsham examines how perspectives connected to religion and landscape changed over the course of the Long Reformation in the British Isles. Like her, the evidence presented here will be analyzed within this conceptual framework, noting associations between Protestantism and Catholicism in the British Isles as they relate to mountains. And though

¹⁸ Dawn L. Hollis, "Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Genealogy of an Idea," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 26, Issue 4 (May 2019): 1038-1061.

she only mentions mountains a handful of times in her work, the ideas that hold true for wells, forests, springs, and rivers share much in common with those of mountains, while also having a few important differences. Walsham, too, like Hollis, identifies and argues for much more nuance in the understanding of landscape, moving beyond Nicolson in her chapter connected with Natural Theology, for instance. In addition, Walsham's work reminds us to consider the religious, as well as the associated political, economic, and military, context of the writings named here. In this way, each can be considered in the context of an evolution of ideas and theology, which brings both explanatory power as well as a more holistic perspective to bear. Beyond this nuance and subtlety, Walsham's most important contribution to this thesis is its argument for connections between religion and physical landscape. She identifies numerous varieties of experience and relationship within her work, and she builds from the Pagan past, where human connections to the landscape were sometimes more evident to the impact of the Reformation with the intention to identify the ways in which religion was both reflected in the landscape and in which the landscape and history also shaped religion. While these pagan roots are immensely important to a more holistic understanding of the landscape in the British Isles, they are not within the scope of this thesis. More closely connected to this thesis are Walsham's explorations of how landscape changed over time. Walsham often contends that this change was never linear and was often immensely complex and place-dependent. Likewise, she often argues for a reorientation of landscape and evolution of ideas, rather than outright rejection of Catholicism, Catholic holy places, and Catholic traditions. Indeed, Walsham attempts to deeply understand many of these often contradictory changes. Though her work focuses on landscape holistically, many of the themes and

ideas present in her work are reflected in the relationship between mountains and men as well. Likewise, many of the changes, attitudes, and viewpoints of the sources she observes will be drawn upon in this thesis, and each of the sources examined here will reflect this context.

Walsham's work is deeply indebted also to Nicholas Tyacke and other scholars that argue for a "Long Reformation" in England, seeking to overcome other dichotomies that have also outlived their usefulness, such as a Reformation "from above" or "from below" along with others.¹⁹ These scholars posit that the notion of a "Long Reformation" is one that is more useful for understanding the often long and drawn out changes that occurred throughout the early modern period in connection with religion. This framework is more useful for explaining these changes because they often took place over extended periods of time, especially when examined on the level of the individual or community. This notion has been taken up by many scholars of the English Reformation, as well as for other places in Europe. It is utilized in this thesis to examine change across the seventeenth century.

Along with Walsham, a group of historians of the last decade or so have been tracing notions of sacredness in spaces mapped across the early modern world. In searching for a nuanced and complex understanding of sacredness in the early modern world, the authors of *Defining the Holy* looked for nuance by exploring various dichotomies: urban and rural, public and private, time in general, visual and spatial. They also attempt the extraordinarily complex job of defining sacred spaces' meaning.²⁰ This latter must also take into consideration other factors, such as the simple distinction

¹⁹ Nicholas Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 1-5.

²⁰ Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 1-16.

between where the divine is located and whether the divine is particular to some places more than others, a hotly contested issue at the root of the Reformation as Walsham and others note. Likewise, the generally agreed-upon notion that Protestantism fostered a more “individualistic” notion of the sacred must also be considered, as well as its obverse: the notion of the authority of who delineates the sacred and the associations of that with power and authority. Authors of this collection examined these notions in a variety of physical and spiritual spaces. With these authors in mind, it is important to note that my argument does not solely focus on sacredness, but it rather emphasizes the prevalence and association of places with divinity, rather than confirming the existence of divinity in particular places. Thus, it attempts to incorporate both Protestant and Catholic views of divinity in relation to place as much as it pertains to doing so in a specific place. However defined, sacredness is mentioned and explored but is not the sole focus of this thesis.

This narrow focus on religion and place builds on the work of many interdisciplinary scholars, as well as upon many theories from the 20th century related to landscapes, nature, and human society. Like with Nicolson, any scholar working here will either directly or indirectly be influenced by a few specific schools of thought or likewise confront other longstanding theories of humans, nature, and human nature. Both authors build off of each other and the connections between their ideas deserve attention. Firstly, Max Weber’s work, which focused on connections between Protestantism and Capitalism, is well-known for its emphasis on a “disenchantment of the world.” According to Weber, this disenchantment allowed for evolutions of thought that led to more mechanized, isolated production and eventually to capitalism, as is reflected in Karl

Marx's notion of alienation. This theory has had profound impact on writing about humans and the natural world, and its influence is well-known. This thesis, following closely in the footsteps of Alexandra Walsham, will seek to reinterpret or re-evaluate this premise, by identifying ways in which landscapes were not simply "disenchanted" or, as some new scholars might suggest, "re-enchanted" but rather, witnessed an evolution of enchantment with regards to how the divine was perceived, received, or connected with mountains over the course of the Long Reformation. However, it is important to note that might be considered merely an indirect consequence of my argument, for I do not argue directly against Weber.²¹

Likewise, this notion closely contradicts that put forth in the 1960s by Lynn White, whose seminal essay on Christianity and the ecological crisis posits that many religions are in fact at the root of notions taken for granted that are undermining the ecological commons upon which we live.²² White identifies ways in which notions of "dominion" have altered humans relationship with the natural world. Recent work by historians such as Mark Stoll argues more directly against this notion.²³ Like Stoll, I will bring to bear at least some of the positive connotations, but also highlight the negatives,

²¹ Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 336; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (New York: Scribner, 1930), 105-6. Walsham argues against Weber's basic conclusion, emphasizing how Protestantism did not just drive culture away and alienate it from the natural world, but it simply transformed the human relationship to the natural world. This goes against previous scholarship on the idea, which took Weber as a sort of given within certain circles, especially those adjacent to Marxist thought. Walsham's critique serves as the assumed background for this paper.

²² Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, New Series 155, No. 3767, (March 1967): 103-107. Like Weber, any historian writing about the connections between religion and environment in the West will need to approach his thesis either directly or indirectly. While very valuable, this thesis holds that White's argument is not the entire story, though it will not argue directly against him in this regard. Indeed, work for another researcher might better confirm this idea.

²³ Mark Stoll, *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 3. Mark Stoll critiques both Weber and White in his exploration of the roots of early environmentalism in the US. Stoll finds a much more positive legacy of religion as it pertains to the environment, especially in Presbyterian and other Protestant denominations.

thus bringing more nuance to the conversation. Once again, like with Weber, I am only indirectly approaching these two ideas, but since they are of a longstanding tradition, they are worth mentioning here.

With this historical tradition in mind, it is easy to locate this thesis at the intersection of environmental, cultural, and religious history. Drawing upon work of other scholars of the Long Reformation, it will seek to integrate human relationships with mountains into this framework, which will help support notions of a Reformation of the Landscape in which the landscape was acted upon by the forces of the Reformation as well as an actor upon those forces. Additionally, the strong connections between mountains and divinity will highlight more about the English mind in this period. This connection will then explore how this demonstrates the liminality of mountain spaces in the English mind of the period. To begin this exploration, this writing will start at the beginning of the century with a well-known travel account in the Alps by Thomas Coryat.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY CENTURY

In the early summer of 1608, an English traveler ascended a mountain in a method quite unusual to the modern eye. Laboring to keep up with his group members, he reluctantly accepted the offer of other members of the company who, at least according to the author, were eager to get some money for him, and offered him a lift – in a chair atop their shoulders.²⁴ Like his later 20th century counterparts on skis and snowboards, then, Thomas Coryat ascended a peak in the Alps, carried not on cables but upon the backs of hired men – and in a chair. This no doubt comical exposition of mountain adventures comes from Coryat's well-known work, *Coryat's Crudities*, an early travel narrative for educated Englishmen that some scholars have declared to be the first which describes the Grand Tour in its contemporary form. In fact, for several generations following Coryat, educated Englishmen would follow a similar route to visit Rome on the Grand Tour.

Beyond its impact, which was likely widely known, Coryat's work, and especially his adventures through the Alps, rightfully give historians ample information to begin a study on views of early modern mountains, beginning at the turn of the seventeenth century. In this section, I will examine how Coryat's work, when partnered with a few other well-known works, gives insight into views of religiosity and divinity in mountains in the early seventeenth century. Beginning the story here, I will be able to trace continuity, change, and complexity through to the later part of the century in subsequent chapters.

²⁴ Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities: hastily gobbled up in five moneths travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands: newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the traveling members of the kingdom*, Volume 1, (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1905), 215-6.

Thomas Coryat's work is useful to begin a study because it gives insight into how travelers of the era might have viewed mountains. Coryat began a type of journey, one for leisure and recreation and not for pilgrimage, that led him to mainland Europe and allowed him to discover the continent more intimately. This type of travel becomes more common throughout the next century and Coryat's influence on this is well-documented. Coryat's account gives insight into the perspectives of a Protestant from England in relationship to not just mountains but the cultural mainstays of central Europe in the early seventeenth century.

Tracking a course from Lyon to Turin, Thomas Coryat spent several weeks crossing the Alps in the summer of 1608. He began his journey in Dover in England and eventually made his way to Venice, the story of which makes up most of his well-known work. Charting his path along the way, Coryat set out to describe to the reader his journeys and to "take occasion to speake a little of the thing which begat and produced these my observations, even of travell into forraine countries, whereby I may the better encourage Gentlemen and lovers of travell to undertake journeys beyond the seas."²⁵ Given the absurdity of the above story, it gives pause to consider the veracity of this more serious statement. In fact, the juxtaposition of seriousness and silly seems to be at the heart of Coryat's work. Much has been written about Coryat's writings, and authors emphasize this dichotomy, noting, in particular, the context in which *Crudities* was written. Most note that a general transformation occurred during the period, one in which travelogs and writing became more focused on individuals as well as more focused on veracity. Earlier periods, they argue, called for more fantastical stories, likely as an inheritance from the golden ages past, much in line with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Now,

²⁵ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 8.

however, given that miracles across Protestant Europe came into question – though divine providence still reigned potent in many circles – and early scientific models became fashionable amongst the learned, new emphasis shifted in this period toward veracity.²⁶ Thus, while it is important to take a critical perspective on Coryat, it is also reasonable to consider the veracity of his tales, even when we read between the lines. When attempting to discover religiosity in Coryat’s work, then, we must take both of these factors into consideration. In this way, it is not just what Coryat describes and writes clearly about that is important; on the contrary, it is what he likely omits that is of interest to the historian. A few notable examples from his alpine crossing are worth investigating here before bringing in contemporaries to compare and contrast with his work.

Near the end of the alpine stretch, Thomas Coryat observed a mountain with an interesting story. This mountain, which he called Roch Melon, was “said to be the highest mountain of all the Alpes, saving one of those that part Italy and Germany” and some considered it to be fourteen miles high, though Coryat doubted this. Coryat was clearly interested in this mountain, as he recorded a story about it, given to his group by one of the guides that helped them cross from Lyon, Maron of Turin. He told the story as follows:

I have heard a pretty history concerning this history mountaine which was this. A certain fellow that had beene a notorious robber and a very enormous liver, being touched with some remorse of conscience for his licentious and ungodly life, got him two religious pictures, one of Christ, and another of the Virgin Mary, which he carried a long time about with him, vowing to spend the remainder of his life in fasting and prayer, for expiation of his offences to God, upon the highest mountaine of all the

²⁶ Kirsten Sandrock, “Truth and Lying in Early Modern Travel Narratives Coryat’s Crudities, Lithgows Totall Discourse and Generic Change,” *European Journal of English Studies* 19, No. 2 (Summer 2015): 189-190.

Alpes. Whereupon he went up to a certaine mountaine that in his opinion was the highest of all the Alpine hills, carrying those two pictures with him, and resolving there to end his life. After he had spent some little time there, two pictures more of Christ and our Lady appeared to him, whereby he gathered (but by what reason induced I know not) that he had not chosen that mountaine which was the highest of all ; so that he wandred a great while about til he found a higher which was this, unto the toppe whereof he went with his pictures, where he spent the residue of his life in contemplation, and never came downe more.²⁷

At what might be considered the apex of his mountaineering adventure, Thomas Coryat recorded this story with great interest. Throughout his work, he incorporated various stories like this one for diverse purposes. Sometimes they were added as ridiculous stories, while at other times they were more clearly intended to instruct. This story seems to indicate the latter, and it is the content of the story, and the connections between divinity and high places, that is worth exploring in more depth.

The first connection worth noting is the metaphor that the mountain plays in the story as it pertains to divinity. Its great height lends evidence to its importance, which is why this mountain of all the ones Coryat presented receives its own narration. Likewise, the metaphorical role consists not just of the mountain's physical presence – its daunting height – but also what this height represents, which in this case has several meanings. The first is as a place of refuge, for the “certain fellow” remains atop this mountain for the rest of his days. Additionally, it can be surmised that he chose this mountain for its metaphorical and physical strength, seeing as though he was willing only to climb the tallest of mountains, which he could rightly see as only the best place to spend fasting and praying.

Other metaphors are clearly present as well in the images the protagonist of the tale took with him. Seeing another pair of images, the fellow was encouraged to continue

²⁷ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 225-6.

moving until he found the tallest mountain. Of course, the images are of great importance, representing two of the holiest figures in Christianity. This particular detail gives the historian reason to pause. Situated in the middle of the Long Reformation, we can infer from the time period that Thomas Coryat was placed at an interesting crossroads regarding iconoclasm and images. His relationship with images, altars, churches, monasteries, and chapels was quite interesting, for he did not omit the associations between these and religiosity throughout the book. On the contrary, he often included these, giving them great praise at times. For instance, at one point he entered the cathedral church of Nevers and upon entering commented on the beauty of the altar, stating that “The high altar of the Church is very sumptuous, being beautified with stately pillars of marble, and great square peeces of touch stone...”²⁸ Other times he was more critical of these observations, such as when he visited Paris and observed a Catholic ceremony of the Sacrament of the Altar, writing chiefly about how parishioners bowed with “all possible reverence and religious behavior” and thus attributed “as much divine adoration to the little wafer cake...as they could doe to Jesus Christ himself...”²⁹ He continued on to consider these pompous shows which he restrained himself from calling theatrical. Thus, Coryat was certainly a man of his age; however, it is interesting to see what interest he did take in the icons and items of worship, from altars to great churches and even castles. It gives credence to the idea that notions of iconoclasm and idolatry were oftentimes blurred, and especially in an age of growing upper- and middle-class materialism and consumerism, many other fine goods, whether the massive stones of a

²⁸ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 162.

²⁹ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 178.

castle or the fine dining ware of the fork could at least amuse travelers and intrigue them. Coryat's nuanced connections with iconography, then, took a central place in his story.

In much the same way that many metaphors can be made from the story given to Coryat, allegories are clearly present in its reading. In fact, two interesting possibilities are apparent when reading critically. The first is most obvious, which has to do with the obedience to the divine power of the church, which in this case situates a lone individual believer at the center of the story, one who attempts to find divinity and only after hardship and trial succeeds in this journey. A second allegorical interpretation can yield interesting insight, which places the believer in a specific place, a potentially sacred space, one where the holy can be located, though not exactly present. Here is another theme that will transpire across the century and is a result of the Long Reformation. The displacement of divinity from specific places into hearts of believers is a trend consistent with the Protestant reorientation of sacredness, part of which was an "all-consuming crusade against idolatry" while at other times was much more benign and involved simply a redefinition of place, according to Alexandra Walsham.³⁰ And while reflected here in allegory and metaphor, this trend will appear again and again throughout the century in experience as well as poetry and story. And, as Walsham also notes, it was not always this crusade, especially in places on the fringes of society. This will be especially apparent in what follows, though it will vary in degree by individual.

Notions of mountains as metaphors and, to a lesser extent, as allegory, have deep roots in literature, ranging from the Greeks and, somewhat less so, the Romans through the medieval period. Tracing her story of gloom-glory, Marjorie Hope Nicolson identified this as perhaps the key way in which pre-modernity conceptualized mountains,

³⁰ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 81.

stating directly that: “The classical heritage was so powerful in the early seventeenth century that we find few literary mountain passages that were not borrowed from either the Greeks or the Romans.”³¹ There is much to back up this claim, as work by William Barton also suggests, as does the continuing research by Jason König; however, as König and Hollis note, the literary heritage is not as direct of a lineage as Nicolson presupposed.³² Likewise, Janice Koelb contends that the metaphors present in Milton but especially in Dante have deeper roots as objects of emotion than Nicolson gave them credit for, focusing even as far back as Lucretius. Building on these former ideas, a few other notable examples from the first half of the seventeenth century will demonstrate validity in this claim.

On March 17, 1639, James Howell penned a letter to a friend wherein he described an experience of the infinite while walking out amongst the natural world. First, peering into the stars, he began to ponder over “the vast magnitude of the universe” and placed the earth within this view of increasingly large and then increasingly small phenomena. Focusing first on the stars, then on a swarm of gnats, then on a bull in the pasture, Howell conjured up a metaphor for the divine. “In my private devotions I presume to compare him to a great Mountain of Light” he said, so that his “soul seems to discern some glorious Form therein.”³³ Building on the mountain as a metaphor, Howell used this feature of the earth, not to contemplate disgust or revile – though he surely showed elsewhere that he had revile for the “high and hideous” Alps – but rather to

³¹ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 41.

³² Dawn Hollis, “The ‘Authority of the Ancients’? Seventeenth-Century Natural Philosophy and Aesthetic Responses to Mountains,” in Dawn Hollis and Jason König, *Mountain Dialogues From Antiquity to Modernity*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 68.

³³ James Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae; the familiar letters of James Howell*, ed. Joseph Jacobs, (London, 1892), 444.

contemplate the divine.³⁴ And despite his negative impulse, which viewed the Alps as monstrous compared to the “Molehills” of Wales, Howell’s account of his trip over the Alps, which crossed essentially the same path as Coryat, was notable for its brevity. Howell emphasized snowy mountains and repeated oddities such as goiters in those who drink mountain water. One interesting point in terms of religiosity, which he mentioned in this crossing, was the “usefulness” of the Alps for humans, which he deemed far less than that of the mountains in Wales, upon which at least sheep grazed. This utility argument is one that is seen frequently and demonstrates further evidence of mountains serving a liminal space, in this case between more “civilized” regions from those much “wilder.” Lastly, Howell’s letter demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between experience and metaphor as they pertain to writing about mountains.

Nonetheless, later in the work, Howell conjured the divine as a mountain, so we are met with a juxtaposition. It is this tendency, like that of Coryat, to share an association with divinity in high places and especially on mountaintops, that is interesting here. It is this tendency, too, that will be present in British culture, with great continuity, across the seventeenth century. This, of course, also has deep cultural roots back to the Romans, placing the throne of Gods atop Olympus and Parnassus, too, of which numerous references existed in the early modern period.

Howell was not the only early modern to draw upon this reference, though. In fact, its ubiquity is profound, and it is this ubiquity that brings into question some part of the gloom-glory dichotomy in which a full picture of “gloom” cannot be possible unless it accounts also for locating the divine in high places.

³⁴ Howell, *Familiar Letters*, 96.

For instance, a little later in the century, the firebrand preacher George Fox referenced mountains in sermons numerous times in his journals. For instance, in happening upon a truth of divinity, he declared, “They that walk in this light, come to the mountain of the house of God, established above all mountains, and to God’s teaching, who will teach them his ways.”³⁵ In another sermon, he returned to the metaphor, proclaiming that, “I saw the mountains burning up; and the rubbish, the rough and crooked ways and places, made smooth and plain, that the Lord might come into his tabernacle.”³⁶ Both metaphors here represent the power of the divine. The first represents the physical stature and presence of God above others, while the second connotes the destruction of strong objects, such as mountains, before the Lord. At another point, Fox proceeded to use mountains a bit differently, equating them with sin, stating that “Then I asked them, Whether their mountain of sin was brought down and laid low in them?”³⁷ Here mountains serve as a physical feature, representative of the immensely large failings of human beings. Fox is but one notable example of this mid-century idea, one which continued throughout the century, emphasizing mountains as metaphors in speeches, sermons, and writing.

In another instance, evidence that gives insight into how common religious associations were with mountains, at least in poetry, can be seen by glancing at entries in Joshua Poole’s *English Parnassus*, published around the mid-century. The entry on “Mountain” contains the word heaven, along with words such as rocky, sky-threatening,

³⁵ George Fox, *A Journal of Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry. Of that Ancient, Eminent, and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox; Who Departed this Life in great Peace with the Lord, the 13th of the 11th Month, 1690.* (London, 1694), 11.

³⁶ Fox, *Journal*, 11.

³⁷ Fox, *Journal*, 28.

inhospitable, solitary, forsaken, unfrequented, and lovely to name a few.³⁸ In an entry on “Parnassus v. Mountaine,” Poole also mentioned the word divine, as well as the word sacred.³⁹ Likewise, in a poem in the collection entitled “Breasts,” Poole composed a crude but telling metaphor not only for mountains but their association with divinity. These “swelling mounts of softer Ivory” and “snow mountains” together “Like Joves heavenly milking alley” which he called “two milky fountains” defined the femininity of breasts with a connection to mountains. But this assumed association goes much deeper, with a connection to the divine in these places. The place between having an association with “elysium” and a “Transplanted Paradise” beyond which “thousand Cupids lie” and where “men and gods with enview look on it.”⁴⁰ The obvious associations need no belaboring, nor does the ridiculousness of the obtuse metaphor; however, nonetheless, this gives us insight into the association between not only mountains and divinity but also femininity, divinity, and mountains, an often omitted connection. It can be inferred that the language used here signifies intimate connection between divinity and high places. Poole’s constant references to ancient mountains and antiquity also help further confirm this.

Other sources contend with mountains as metaphors as well, often with association with sin, obstacles, and hardships. For instance, in one sermon from 1634, mountains are connected with sin, noting that the people’s “sinnes are raised over our

³⁸ Joshua Poole, *The English Parnassus: Or, A Helpe to English Poesie. Containing a Collection of All Rhyming Monosyllables, the Choices Epithets, and Phrases: With some General Forms Upon All Occassions, Subjects, and Theams, Alphabetically Digested.* (London, 1657), 137.

³⁹ Poole, *English Parnassus*, 151.

⁴⁰ Poole, *English Parnassus*, 266-7.

heads like terrible mountaines.”⁴¹ These metaphors are just a few examples of the connections between divinity and mountains.

Beyond metaphors and allegories, other features of Coryat’s work give us great detail about mountains and religion as well, some of which will be echoed in other works of the seventeenth century. One such instance is worth substantiating here, which will demonstrate this continuity. Coryat offered great detail about the journey over the mountainous region of Savoy and the foothills in Lyon in his work, providing insight into the relationship between people and place, as well as between religion and place. First, it is worth mentioning the connections between place and specific figures that are suggestive of remnants of holy – or in this case not so holy – connections. For instance, like many later travelers, Coryat identified connections between Lyons and Pontius Pilate, with whom a mountain in the Alps shares a name for the supposed death of the figure that occurred nearby. It is apparent by Coryat’s time that this legend still had some veracity, though Coryat was uncertain.⁴² Likewise, Coryat met no fewer than two pilgrims who had just returned from Compostela. And though he found one a “simple fellow” it gives some insight into his beliefs connected to the holiness of specific places, which he seemed to consider somewhat nuanced, as well as the fact that he did not outright dismiss their journeys.⁴³ Feeling the need to mention it, for example, means its inclusion served some purpose, which may be to point out the oddity to other English readers, or perhaps, if this claim is taken seriously, that he was simply curious and recorded all manner of events worth mentioning in order to explore the diversity of the

⁴¹ John Monlas, *The Sovles Pilgrimage to the Celestial Glorie: Or, the Perfect VVay to Heaven and to God*. (London, 1634), 80.

⁴² Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities*, 207.

⁴³ Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities*, 165.

continent. Likewise, one additional association of a relic deserves mentioning. In Chambéry, the capital of Savoy, Coryat encountered a castle in which was “kept a very auncient and religious relique” that was deemed of great importance, since it was “the shroud wherein our Saviours blessed body was wrapped.”⁴⁴ To an Englishman at the time, this could have been considered absurd, a relic of this time being kept on what seemed to be a somewhat secretive display. But Coryat moved on without much other referencing, noting that the oddest feature to him was the fact that all churches were built from wood.

Besides these mentions of relics and artifacts, though, Coryat’s continued focus on the oddities of places that he visited gives insight into the religious life of those that lived in mountain places during this period, though the reader is certainly limited in their view of them, seeing them only through his eyes and words. It is obvious, for example, that some sort of waystation system had been in function for some time in this region, as he stayed at various guesthouses, inns, or other places along the way with only rare mention of places ill-suited to his taste. Thus, though more sparsely inhabited than Paris or Lyons, the region he traveled in did have what seemed to be year-round inhabitants. And these inhabitants, like their contemporary European counterparts, built up great temples for God. In one instance, Coryat mentioned passing by Monmelian, a mountain built upon a massive rock that overlooks an Alpine valley and which became a mentionable feature in subsequent accounts. Here is but one example of different associations of place with religiosity. Surely if one were to only view mountains and alpine places as hellish, one would not choose to place a fortress-like structure of a church there. This claim is supported by further evidence that Coryat continually gave,

⁴⁴ Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities*, 217.

sometimes nonchalantly, about the settling of this region, which was rich with chapels and churches, as well as institutions of learning. At other times, he went out of his way to explicitly mention, above all else, not just beauty in the mountains and features of culture, but specifically the churches and chapels he passed. For instance, departing from la Chambre, he made special mention of a parish called “S Andre”, beyond which he spotted a “wondrous high mountaine” with an “exceeding high rocke.”⁴⁵ Additionally, in the valley town of St. Jean de Morienne, he mentioned a school and a parish church “having a faire steeple.” Likewise, he noticed the fact that “exceeding is the abundance of wooden crosses in Savoy” as well as “a marvailous miltitude of little Chappels” and also “many other religious persons” whose images were displayed.⁴⁶ He mentioned as well that he oftentimes saw some at devotion in or near these places.

This evidence corroborates well with research done by Jon Mathieu related to the sacredness of places during this time period, especially mountains. Notably, Mathieu presents empirical evidence of the proliferation of chapels, crosses, and other artifacts in mountain regions in the Early Modern World, with an emphasis on the Alps. He gives numerous examples of this growth, mentioning in particular an instance about a valley in Valais Switzerland of a few thousand inhabitants in which “at least 70 churches and chapels” were “built between 1650 and 1800.”⁴⁷ Likewise, since the placing of crosses “was a religious act of some significance” there was a growing trend in the period toward this practice. Furthermore, Mathieu states that “over time, a rich inventory of religious symbols ranging from large church buildings to small chapels...developed.” Though

⁴⁵ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 223.

⁴⁶ Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 224.

⁴⁷ Jon Mathieu, “The Sacralization of Mountains in Europe During the Modern Age,” *Mountain Research and Development* 26, No. 4 (November 2006): 345.

Mathieu does note that mountains, especially high mountains in Europe, tended to have less association with divinity during the earlier periods of this era. This can be explained by numerous factors, but interestingly it makes one consider the idea of liminality and just how far that liminality had gone and to where. It certainly challenges claims made elsewhere in this thesis; however, it is also important to note that the liminal space itself changes, especially as some humans gain more and more access to a specific place. Without a doubt, and quite to the contrary, of the demolition of places as part of the Reformation, “From the sixteenth century onwards, there was an expansion of sacred landscapes.”⁴⁸ It was among this change that Coryat crossed the Alps.

This evidence should not be read uncritically, but it does give insight into a few potential ideas. First, Coryat was likely trying to juxtapose Britain with the rest of Catholic Europe. Even if not intentional, it is certain that he was doing so; however, this does not mean he was doing so out of disregard for Catholicism, though, as stated above, he did at times outright approach this. Rather, one must place him in the context of writing a travelogue about place, noting that his identification of rituals, pictures, and other phenomena that were different than in Britain is also the point, perhaps even curiously so. On the other hand, at least when in the mountains and mountainous regions, rarely did Coryat mention any of these with any ounce of denunciation or disgust, and this fact is important. Likewise, it is important to consider his very purpose for traveling, which he claimed early in the entry was to “infuse (I hope) a desire to them to travel into transmarine nations, and to garnish their understanding with the experience of other countries” and thus to “travell into forraine countries, and enrich themselves partly with

⁴⁸ Mathieu, “Sacralization of Mountains,” 348.

the observations...”⁴⁹ Coryat, then, had a unique perspective, and a unique openness to diverse perspectives, which perhaps differed from many men of his age. However, as Walsham notes throughout her work, the relationship between Protestants and place is much more complicated than the “crusade” previously mentioned. In fact, as Walsham notes, “Protestantism's effects on the physical environment were thus mixed: significant continuities coexisted with conspicuous currents of change.”⁵⁰ In Coryat, this idea began to emerge, and continued through other accounts.

Taking this nuance into account, it is evident that Coryat’s writing brings to light written evidence that corroborates with archaeological evidence and highlights the increasing association of mountains with divinity, especially in the form of chapels, shrines, crosses, and other relics being placed among them during the period. This far predates any of the placing of crosses that took place again in the “Golden Age” of Alpinism, but it is surely a precedent to that practice, though further research would need to confirm this hypothesis. Likewise, Coryat’s crossing gives insight into how particular educated Englishmen of the period viewed these landscapes and the associations of religiosity with them.

Coryat’s detail and adventures in mountainous regions attest to the fact that not only were the Alps populated, but religious people lived amongst those places. Additionally, mountains there had religious literary associations, as well as chapels and churches and castles built into the very rock, not to mention possessing, religious relics pertinent to the Christian faith or at least claiming so. It is clear, then, that Coryat found varieties of religiosity in mountain places. This religiosity will continue to be found in

⁴⁹ Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities*, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, 116.

other sources, and its evolution is important to chart. Coryat did not find “The Sublime” in the sense of Nicolson’s exploration. Indeed, he is included in the literary heritage of those who had not “experienced the ‘ecstasy’ or ‘rapture’ common in the next century.”⁵¹ And while this seems valid to a certain extent, essences of these rapturous feelings can be traced, hidden well in myths and tales and behind the walls of churches. Even so, the Sublime is a particular individual experience, constructed with specific language that Coryat did not have. However, it is important to note that Coryat also only ascended a few mountain passes, and not for the same reasons as others. Furthermore, to Coryat, as will soon be made clear with reference to John Evelyn, different mountains have different associations, and it is this point – and assumption – that needs critiquing. It is part of the argument of this thesis that mountains have different associations with divinity despite sharing a wide range of consistent themes. Thus, seeking to find “rapture” in only those mountains which, as they are assumed to be, “true mountains” of any sort, is itself an historical relic that needs to be pushed to the surface to be critiqued and reviewed. As evident in the writings of subsequent thinkers, mountains were also treated differently not only based on their locations but upon a myriad number of other factors, first and foremost the mind of the individual observing them. For instance, many inaccessible peaks, like many of the Alps would have been to Coryat and Evelyn – and frankly, many travelers today without ice axes and crampons – will undoubtedly have different associations than hike-able hills in lowland England. This nuance is critical for understanding how humans associated religion with mountains, as taken into account on a case-by-case basis, even when attempting to generalize about mountains. In fact, the best generalizations possible to make might be only broad in style. To help with these

⁵¹ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 62.

generalizations, it is useful to corroborate Coryat's account with others roughly contemporary to him.

Contemporary with Coryat, and one of the authors mentioned in his lengthy *Panegyrick Verses*, Michael Drayton and his work are well-known to Early Modern Historians. Also a contemporary of Shakespeare and Donne, Drayton produced massive compendiums of poetry, many of which were interested in the natural world and England more broadly. Most famous of these is his poem, in 30 songs, known as *Poly-Olbion*. This poem richly transcribes the landscape and history of Britain into an epic poem, and the associations therein contain rich information about mountains. And though much in Drayton is derivative, it provides insight into the period and its evolving relationship with landscape; indeed, if Drayton is derivative, then historians might need to contend with an even deeper continuity over time of mountains and religious associations, though that is beyond the scope presented here. Nonetheless, Drayton's work still gives strong evidence of the associations between human thought and mountains, particularly with religious significance.

Drayton was a poet of the age, and the connection between place, power, and ideas is fruitful throughout his work. Because of this, mountains are often a centerpiece of his writing, even taking on personified roles such as those in the fourth chapter. Interestingly, many of these come from Monmouthshire and Wales, while Scotland's receive only silence. Drayton spoke of and for them diversely, creating many roles in the play and performing and musing about Britain's heroic past, connecting back to Aeneas and other notable figures of antiquity. A few passages stand out for his use of metaphor.

For instance, in passage personifying Malverne, king of the hills, we see this line, which is indicative:

Whilst Malverne (king of Hills) faire Severne ouer-lookes
 (Attended on in state with tributatie Brookes)
 And how the fertill fields of Hereford doe lie.
 And from his many heads, with many an amorous eye
 Beholds his goodlie site, how towards the pleasant rise,
 Abounding in excesse, the Vale of Eusham lies,
 The Mountaines euery way about him that doe stand,
 Of whom hee's daily seene, and seeing doth command;
 On tiptoes set aloft, this prouddie vttereth hee:
 Olympus, fayr'st of Hills, that Heauen art said to bee,
 I not envie thy state, nor lesse my selfe doe make;
 Nor to possesse thy name, mine owne would I forsake.⁵²

Within this one portion of a stanza, Drayton highlighted numerous connections between mountains and religiosity that are worth identifying clearly. First, there is the obvious connection between Britain and Greece, in the mentioning of Olympus, as previously stated, which gives great insight into Nicolson's and Barton's arguments regarding the deep literary roots of associations of mountains with divinity. Secondly, this stanza includes a personification of Malverne, the king of the hills, in which he speaks and describes his own splendor. This trend continues throughout Drayton's work and even, at one point, embodies soldiers and battles, with the mountains, all personified, growing into amazing warriors. All of this evidence points to obvious positive associations between actual places and the powers contained within them. For many Protestants at the time, these stories are wholly allegorical, rather than literal remembrances of the past; still, the association of grand places with grand narratives is one that deserves to be highlighted, as it further nuances an understanding of the relationship between Protestants and place. Particularly, it also gives credence to

⁵² Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, (London, 1612), 102.

Walsham's notion that some places were revered, though in a different way, by Protestants for their historical significance, their connection to a deeper and more profound past, or their "re-christening" in new forms of sacredness. At other times, one could consider these places even to be "imaginatively appropriated" for secular or other purposes.⁵³

Elsewhere in the work, hints between place, power, and religion are also present. For instance, in another chapter Drayton explored stories of the connections between Welsh ancestry and that of the English, and in the story Snowdon, the mountain, took on a role. Additionally, the mountain was described interestingly as "For Snowdony, a Hill, imperiall in his seat, Is from his mighty foote, vnto his head so great..."⁵⁴

Together with Malverne, Snowdony, the tallest peak in Wales, there gains an association with divinity and kingly authority. Along with this, ideas of religion, beyond those of Ancient connection, are also present in Drayton. Olympus is named as where "Heaven art said to be" and this understanding demonstrates the sources from which ideas of divinity as associated with mountains were derived.⁵⁵ Even here, in the mountains of Wales, similar connections can be made, though Malverne states above that he would not swap his name for Olympus, either because he wis humble or perhaps because Malverne, too, being king of the hills, is great in his own majesty.

Greece continued to play a role in Drayton's poem elsewhere, too, especially in relation to mountains. One particular instance drew together the Greco-Roman ideas and that of Christianity:

What Forrest, Flood, or Field, that standoth not in awe,

⁵³ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 156.

⁵⁴ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 138.

⁵⁵ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 102.

Of Sina, or shall see the sight that Mountaine
 To none but to a Hill such grace was euer given:
 As on his back tis said, great Atlas beares vp heauen.⁵⁶

Here the reader sees Sina, which is assumed to be representative of Sinai, being praised and revered. Likewise, there are also connections to Atlas bearing heaven upon his back. Interestingly, grace is given to a hill here in the poem, which indicates its association with divinity more strongly. Both lineages are present here and they demonstrate the growing complex relationship between religion and mountains. While Drayton likely did not view particular places as sacred or holy, his work does indicate the fact that certain places of historical importance, such as Sinai or Olympus, could hold sacredness or perhaps reverence for certain peoples who deeply appreciated their inherited legacy. And though this evolved throughout the century, it is obvious in the work of Drayton that relationships between ancient authority and wisdom, holiness specific to specific places, and growing scientific and antiquarian knowledge were actually quite complex in the period.

One more mention from Drayton deserves consideration here. While Drayton's work did not explicitly mention his own ventures into places, like Coryat's and Evelyn's did, it seems obvious that travel for research most likely took an extensive role in the creation of the poem. For this reason, considering the following passage gives us further insight:

Yet, falling to my lor, This stoutlie I maintaine
 Gainst Forrests, Valleys, Fields, Groues, Riuers, Pasture, Plaine,
 And all their flatter kind (so much that doe relie
 Vpon their feedings, flocks, and the infertilitie)
 The Mountaine is the King: and he it is alone
 About the other soyles that Nature doth in throne
 For Mountains be like Men of braue heroique mind,

⁵⁶ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 105.

With eyes erect to heauen; of whence them selues they find.⁵⁷

In this passage, there is a clear connection between three interesting features of a personified and allegorical mountain: bravery, kingly authority, and heaven. All of these could be interpreted as features of a monarch, or perhaps the Christian monarch. All of these associations connect specifically to mountains. The preceding lines come from the same speech aforementioned by Malverne, which further confirms the strong connection. Additionally, he contrasts mountains with valleys here, indicating:

Whereas the low lie Vale, as earthlie, like it selfe,
Doth neuer further looke then how to purchase pelfe.
And of their batfull sites, the Vales that boast them thus,
Nere had been what they are, had it not been for vs.⁵⁸

Certainly some aspects of the line, given this context, can be seen as boastfulness in the character of Malverne. Nonetheless, Malverne as a character still embodies these ideas, even if they are read as allegories. Kingly authority being associated with high places, whether they be forts and castles or high mountains, seems to be a longstanding tradition. Transferring this exact authority to God is a logical conclusion, or, on the contrary, transferring it from God to human monarchs is likewise logical. Most interesting is the idea that the mountain itself reigns as the monarch of the natural world, enthroned by Nature, and whose eyes are “erect to heaven” and thus situated in a sacred position of authority and closeness with the heavenly monarch. The language that drapes this monarch with power is wholly religious and political, an overlap likely seen as an unstated assumption at the time. When considering *Poly-Olbion* and *Coryat's Crudities* in this context, tremendous overlap regarding divinity and mountains is found, which

⁵⁷ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 104.

⁵⁸ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 104.

adds to a nuanced understanding of mountains and religion and the metaphoric connections between them.

Likewise, other works of the period give insight into alternative perspectives related to mountains and religion that expand upon the notion of metaphor. To bring in an alternative perspective, it is worth considering Catholic views as they pertain to mountains, especially in England. In the context of the well-known destruction of monasteries, altars, and chapels, one might assume that because of the ill fate of these “spectacles of annihilation” that “reduced to rubble” the holy relics, one might assume that Catholic views were wholly absent.⁵⁹ On the contrary, Catholicism, while deeply repressed, did not disappear. And Catholic connections to mountains, even metaphorically, give us another story. Robert Southwell, one of what would be later known as the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, was a tremendous example in both Catholic connections to mountains and the allegorical readings possible therein.

In a poem titled “A Vale of Tears,” which was written in 1578, and which was likely based on the Latin biblical phrase *valle lacrimarum* – which when translated in the Bishop’s Bible (1568) reads the same as the title of Southwell’s poem – was a clear example of a different kind of relationship with mountains and religion.

Southwell’s poem begins by describing a specific place, one through which “there is none but pilgrim wights” and this place “is enwrapped with dreadful shades” as well as more beautiful features, such as “Where hanging cliffs yield short and dumpish glades” and “snowy floods with broken streams do run.” The vista was one “from rock to cloudy sky” and “from thence to dales” all “with stony ruins strawed.” His pilgrim continued back and forth, naming both frightening features, as well as those beautiful associations.

⁵⁹ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 151.

Then, the reader is informed that only pilgrims traveled here, in this valley surrounded by mountains and buttressed in by rivers and cliffs and birds. And since these pilgrims “pass with trembling foot and panting heart” the reader gets a sense of the challenge of the journey. But nonetheless, the reader can be reassured, as this is Nature’s doing:

They judge the place to terror framed by art.
 Yet nature’s work it is, of art untouched,
 So strait indeed, so vast unto the eye,
 With such disordered order strangely couched,
 And so with pleasing horror low and high,

That who it views must needs remain aghast,
 Much at the work, more at the maker’s might;
 And muse how Nature such a plot could cast,
 Where nothing seemeth wrong, yet nothing right:

A place for mated minds, an only bower
 Where every thing doth soothe a dumpish mood;
 Earth lies forlorn, the cloudy sky doth lour,
 The wind here weeps, here sighs, here cries aloud.

Continuing with vivid descriptions that are at times contradictory – likely the intended effect –the reader is brought by Southwell to a place to stay:

Sit here, my soul, mayne streams of tears afloat,
 Here all thy sinful foils alone recount;
 Of solemn tunes make thou the doleful note,
 That to thy ditties dolour may amount.

When Echo doth repeat thy painful cries,
 Think that the very stones thy sins bewray,
 And now accuse thee with their sad replies,
 As heaven and earth shall in the latter day.⁶⁰

The reader is at last told to “let former faults be fuel of thy fire” so that this can “be the burden of thy song.” Clearly, the valley through which Southwell’s pilgrims traveled is an allegory connected to the struggles of Catholics surviving in Early Modern

⁶⁰ Robert Southwell, *The Poetical Works of the Reverend Robert Southwell*, ed. William B. Turnbull, (London, 1856), 139-42.

England. Likewise, it can be read metaphorically to instill in the reader a sense of what it might mean to make a pilgrimage during these tumultuous times. Interestingly, Southwell didn't view this entire experience as merely hardship; in fact, he often delighted in the beauty and terror of this place. Likewise, if the poem is corroborated with Psalms 84:6, the meaning might become more profound – and certainly resonates with allegory: “They journeying through the vale of teares: (yea when every resterne [at their name] is filled with water) do accept it for a [fayre pleasant] well.”⁶¹ A more contemporary reading suggests how people turn rain into water. Thus, turning the unpleasant to pleasant, in emulation of the lord, Southwell likely wanted to show readers an example of what journeying through this vale might entail. Here then is another example of mountains serving as metaphors with a relationship to the divine, which in this case can be interpreted through associations with hardship. Additionally, mountains existed here as beautiful places, hidden amongst the terror of high cliffs and roaring waters. This evidence corroborates well with Coryat's crossing. What is unique about Southwell's mountain is that it is meant to represent a real-world struggle, even if the place itself is not meant to represent one specific place. Southwell's “imagined” place resonates as strongly as the experienced places with associations between divinity and mountains. Likewise, it makes one consider the notion of liminality, though in a different way, because it considers that mountains might also serve as places of refuge, as well as of trials and tribulation, but also perhaps beauty, all of which are separated, yet only barely so, from the spaces of the human and the divine.

Further evidence of this liminality of space comes from other travelers and authors of the period, many of whom also gave detail of other associations between

⁶¹ The Bishop's Bible, 1568, The Psalmes, XXVII; Psalms 84:6.

divinity, mountains, and religiosity. For instance, William Lithgow, the famous Scottish traveler who explored, in-depth, not only his native Scotland but various locations on the continent and Near East, penned a poem about Mount Etna in Sicily that clearly highlights the joy of mountains and also their connection with divinity. Lithgow wrote about Etna that “High standes thy toppe, but higher lookes mine eye” to this majestic place, but it was actually he that was higher: “High soares thy smoake, but higher my desire.” And though the snow was high upon the top, “higher up ascendes my braue design,” Lithgow wrote. And due to this height, an experience took hold of him, one in which, “My poore Soule, the highest Heavens doth claime.”⁶² In Lithgow, something was present that continued to resonate across the seventeenth century: associations between mountains and divinity, not just in writing and poetry but in experience. In fact, Lithgow’s experience atop Mt. Etna demonstrates one of the clearest connections between divinity and high places, all seen within the perspective, in this case, of the individual. Lithgow’s experience would not be uncommon in the century, though certainly not everyone experienced such bliss as he or such curiosity as Coryat. Rather, the experiences were as diverse as the individuals. Regardless, Lithgow’s ascent of Mt. Etna and its associations of the summit with divinity continue to build evidence for the idea that mountains are liminal spaces because they mediate between the divine and the human, a construct that was changing significantly during this period as Protestantism

⁶² William Lithgow, *The totall discourse, of the rare adventures, and painefull peregrinations of long nineteene yeares travailes from Scotland, to the most famous kingdomes in Europe, Asia, and Affrica Perfited by three deare bought voyages, in surveying of forty eight kingdomes ancient and modern; twenty one rei-publicks, ten absolute principalities, with two hundred islands. ... divided into three bookes: being newly corrected, and augmented in many severall places, with the addition of a table thereunto annexed of all the chiefe heads. Wherein is contayed an exact relation of the lawes, religions, policies and governments of all their princes, potentates and people. Together with the grievous tortures he suffered by the Inquisition of Malaga in Spaine ... And of his last and late returne from the Northern Isles, and other places adjacent.* (London, 1640), 397.

reshaped the landscape. With Lithgow, this placing of the experience of the divine within the individual, rather than in specific locations like the Catholic tradition had done for many centuries, signals a change or evolution that corroborates with the idea of a Long Reformation. However, as can be seen in Southwell, this change was not universal, nor did it fundamentally expunge the notion that divinity could be found in or in association with specific places, such as mountains. This trend of a gradual relocation of divinity and sacredness in particular places or within individuals is a theme that continues across the century, and it gives credence to the notion that mountains continued to be liminal spaces, though the specifics of these spaces varied across time and place.

CHAPTER 2: THE MID-CENTURY

The next morning we mounted again through strange, horrid, and fearful crags and tracts, abounding in pine trees, and only inhabited by bears, wolves, and wild goats; nor could we anywhere see above a pistol shot before us, the horizon being terminated with rocks and mountains, whose tops, covered with snow, seemed to touch the skies, and in many places pierced the clouds.⁶³

So began John Evelyn's September crossing of the Alps in 1646. Evelyn's many works are well-known to historians of the seventeenth century, and his greatest source, the diary that he kept sporadically throughout most of his adult life, is a treasure trove for researchers into the period. Like many unwritten accounts before him, John Evelyn also crossed the Alps and kept this story in a diary, probably without intent of publishing it, though he did publish many other books related to concepts in the natural world. A founding fellow of the Royal Society, Evelyn was an educated, experienced, and intellectual man of the era with a taste for art, cosmopolitanism, and travel, spending numerous years on the continent during periods of unrest amid the English Civil War. Evelyn's account of his crossing of the Alps gives us great insight into any potential associations with religiosity and mountains in the mid-century. Interestingly, as will be mentioned further later, Evelyn also visited other mountainous places outside of his home islands, with a few ascents of smaller but famous mountains, such as Vesuvius. In this chapter, I will begin an exploration of the mid-century with Evelyn's mountain adventures before corroborating with other sources to demonstrate the continuity and change from the early century.

Like Coryat, Evelyn wrote in detail about his adventures in the Alps. From his opening line above, a sense of the wildness of his experience is already present. A few

⁶³ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. William Bray, and Richard Garnett (New York: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 229.

points related to this are worth mentioning before moving into the journey itself. First, obvious connections will be drawn with Thomas Coryat. This is obvious in his use of language, though a key difference between the two is that Coryat wrote for an audience while Evelyn might not have meant to publish his journals. Secondly, he likely felt the need to corroborate or mention similar events or ideas to add veracity to his story. A few of these include his mentions of people who, because they drank mountain water, had large goiters. Likewise, he, like Coryat, was terrified of the tremendous and roaring waters of the many streams that flowed down from the mountains.⁶⁴ Evidence such as this gives credence to the idea that Evelyn wanted to not only borrow from Coryat to confirm similar evidence but also wanted some veracity to be given to his account, if anyone was to ever read it. He may have also intended on publishing something later in life and wanted to refer back to the material as well. Either way, it seems likely that John Evelyn's account of crossing the Alps can give insight into the notions present in the elite level of society at the time, if read critically.

After having "had a very infamous wretched lodging" in Vedra, John Evelyn and his party rose to ascend into the Alps in the region of Mount Sampion. This excursion over to Geneva, though quite clearly borrowing from Thomas Coryat, had little of the enthusiasm of Coryat's accounts. This is quite clear for a few reasons. First, Evelyn's crew was arrested when descending the pass, due to a dog in the company killing a goat. Held until bail, they eventually paid their way out, but they were quite distraught. Likewise, Evelyn, though a searcher of beauty and goodness, was quite obviously a cosmopolitan man of the city, rather than one to explore mountains. Pre-occupied by the capture and the fact that, upon reaching Geneva and the descent, he contracted smallpox

⁶⁴ Evelyn, *Diary*, 232.

and was laid up for weeks, John Evelyn's experience in the Alps was not full of Coryat's curiosities. Needless to say, the experience was less than ideal for Evelyn.⁶⁵ His discomfort in this zone between civilization and barbarism is clear, and his distinctions and dismissals of the folk of the region does give credence to a different notion of mountains as liminal spaces because it suggests that this liminality has a wider cultural diffusion. Rather than just merely a religious mediator, mountains also served as cultural mediators, boundaries between different types of people. The language Evelyn used to describe the inhabitants of the region gives this idea strong validity. For instance, Evelyn complained at one point during his arrest that they "might have had our heads cut off." Evelyn and company's treatment was so ill that upon entering a town after the event, he received a letter to take to the regional government with the intent to "most severely punish the whole rabble."⁶⁶ But by the time they were back in civilization, they had nearly forgotten the whole venture. As this whole experience demonstrates, the associations for mountains were quite varied during the century and thus the style and specifics of this liminality varied greatly by individual experience. As another example, while Evelyn was more apt to dismiss the mountains for the cities, Coryat experienced something different, in a spirit of curiosity. Liminality in this case is not universal, but pliable; however, its recurrence, in varied forms, suggests a broader tendency.

Despite the challenges of this event, Evelyn never appealed to God for help, or referenced the deity with regards to the terrible series of events that met him across the Alps. His one reference to religiosity or divinity in the mountains in this case was a small chapel he found upon the crest of the pass to Mount Sampion, along with a few huts. Like

⁶⁵ Evelyn, *Diary*, 229-236.

⁶⁶ Evelyn, *Diary*, 235.

Coryat before him, this evidence helps to corroborate with that of the researcher Jon Mathieu. Overall, Evelyn's account gives a different perspective on the Alps than Coryat's. Coryat's curiosity was more potent, while Evelyn was an antiquarian interested in the past and in beautiful, ordered natural wonders that were quite adjacent or intermixed with society, rather than on the perceived fringes.

Outside of the Alps, John Evelyn did reveal religious associations with mountains through a mountain experience, though. Prior to his Alpine crossing, Evelyn traveled extensively throughout the continent, following the valleys along the Western ridge of the Alps to get to the coast, from where he sailed along the Mediterranean to mainland Italy where he made multiple journeys inland. In these adventures, associations with mountains are present, many of which have religious connections, either historically through tales, or through his amazement at human works in these places, along with a sense of beauty for the places themselves. All of this gives strong reason for historians to reconsider interpretations and definitions of mountains in order to more fully account for the diversity of mountain experiences. The Alps, inaccessible to most – even to many today – certainly inspire awe, as well as fear, in travelers, two prerequisites for Nicolson's aesthetic. However, the aesthetic is clearly connected to religion as well, and here in Evelyn once can note not only positive aesthetic qualities, in the form of everyday beauty and pleasure, as well as connections between divinity and mountains. Mt. Vesuvius, to most contemporaries of Nicolson or those historians of the Alpine Club, might not fit the category of a "true mountain." But it is this assumption that must be brought to the forefront and critiqued. Likewise, having a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes a mountain will give a clearer definition and example of how mountains

serve as liminal spaces. Those mountains that are more accessible, more intimately connected with antiquity and history, and those with greater access to cities and society will play a vastly different role than those remote places beyond society, many of which were not accessible until the modern era. Thus, mountains across the continent are likely to have different associations, based on the factors that make that mountain unique in space and time. Of course, these specific associations will be culturally, as well as historically, contextual and not immutable through time. Thus, the term “mountain” is a rather vague one but including its many variations here will help to further demonstrate the association of mountains with divinity and religiosity, and in turn it will allow for a deeper investigation of mountains as liminal spaces in the minds of the seventeenth century British elite.

With this in mind, it seems clear that John Evelyn discovered a more personal religious experience in the Apennine Mountains than he had in the Alps. Departing from the Sienna region, Evelyn’s company passed by Monte Pientio, contemporarily known as Monte Amiata, a prominent lava dome in the outskirts of the Sienna region. Here, Evelyn and company ascended at least part way up the mountain, where they stopped for the night at an inn alongside it. On the ascent, Evelyn writes about the mountain in language layered with religiosity:

Next morning, we rode by Monte Pientio, or, as vulgarly called, Monte Mantumiato, which is of an excessive height, ever and anon peeping above any clouds with its snowy head, till we had climbed to the inn at Radicofani, built by Ferdinand, the great Duke, for the necessary refreshment of travelers in so inhospitable a place. As we ascended, we entered a very thick, solid, and dark body of clouds, looking like rocks at a little distance, which lasted near a mile in going up; they were dry misty vapors, hanging undissolved for a vast thickness, and obscuring both the sun and earth, so that we seemed to be in the sea rather than in the clouds, till, having pierced through it, we came into a most serene heaven, as if we

had been above all human conversation, the mountain appearing more like a great island than joined to any other hills; for we could perceive nothing but a sea of thick clouds rolling under our feet like huge waves, every now and then suffering the top of some other mountain to peep through, which we could discover many miles off: and between some breaches of the clouds we could see landscapes and villages of the subjacent country. This was one of the most pleasant, new, and altogether surprising objects that I had ever beheld.⁶⁷

Here, a younger Evelyn looked upon this mountain with newness, surprise, and pleasure. Indeed, he wrote about the experience with direct reference to divinity, as if they had come “into a most serene heaven.” It is also important to note that Evelyn did not ascend the entire mountain; he did not attain the “Summit position,” but nonetheless, here he found divinity in this space of what, at least to him, appeared to be beauty. Thus, like his successors, Evelyn found a positive association with mountains and divinity. This is not Nicolson’s “Sublime,” because she notes that Evelyn is from the literary heritage of the idea, but it is clear that Evelyn had traces of this notion. If taken seriously, in his context, he did find, within moments of this stupendous experience, a “horrid rock” of a summit, “heaps of rocks” that would “affright one with their horror” and thus did identify great terror and beauty together, two of the prerequisites for a religious sublime.⁶⁸ However, these are not roots, but the soil of the sublime, a new metaphor. I call them the soil because, like other traces, they are less a direct link to the Sublime, but it is clear that these ideas relate to infinity, God, and sublimity and are the context from which it eventually emerges in its identifiable form in the eighteenth century. Evelyn’s description was not sublimity, strictly speaking, but it was pleasurable and new to him. This association of a mountain with divinity has a long literary heritage, but it is not just

⁶⁷ Evelyn, *Diary*, 97.

⁶⁸ Evelyn, *Diary*, 98.

limited to prose. Evelyn's mention of a relationship between mountains and heaven also echoes in the work of one of Evelyn's later contemporaries, John Milton.

With "things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime," John Milton, the blind poet of Revolutionary England, opened his epic *Paradise Lost* with the mention of no less than three mountains from the world: Sinai, Oreb, and the Aonian Mount. Milton's indebtedness to antiquity needs no clarification, but an interest in how his poetry connects divinity, religion, and mountains deserves mentioning here as one of Evelyn's contemporaries.⁶⁹

Well-known for placing obscure geographical locations into his poetry, Milton's epic poem contains both real and imagined mountains; or rather, contains earthly mountains and the imagined and real existing paradise, which was placed upon a lofty mountain. This is most clear in one verse from *Paradise Lost*. Adam, upon ascending to heaven, encounters a Hill:

Ascend, I follow thee, safe Guide, the path
 Thou lead'st me, and to the hand of Heav'n submit,
 However chast'ning, to the evil turne
 My obvious breast, arming to overcom
 By suffering, and earne rest from labour won,
 If so I may attain. So both ascend
 In the Visions of God: It was a Hill
 Of Paradise the highest, from whose top
 The Hemisphere of Earth in cleerest Ken
 Strecth out to amplest reach of prospect lay.
 Not higher that Hill nor wider looking round,
 Whereon for different cause the Tempter set
 Our second ADAM in the Wilderness,
 To shew him all Earths Kingdomes and thir Glory.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ John Milton, *The Paradise Lost*, ed. Reverend James Robert Boyd (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1851), 17.

⁷⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 487-8.

From this great height, Adam is capable of seeing “City of old or modern Fame” and of the “mightiest Empire” to have existed, as well as all of the earthly geographies known at the time, from Mosco to Persia to the Niger, Atlas Mount, the Congo, Marocco, Cusco in Peru to Mexico and El Dorado. All of these earthly places were seen upon this high hill to Adam when he ascended. It is clear that Milton calls it a hill, rather than a mountain, to match his iambic pentameter, but is characteristics, this was clearly a mountain. It is precisely upon this mountain that Milton places paradise. There is a tendency to want to read Milton metaphorically or allegorically, as was done with Southwell in the previous chapter. While there is a tremendous amount of allegory in Milton’s work, the association of divinity with height and that of the Devil with that which is below might purely be a trick of language and rhetoric. However, as this verse makes clear, the idea is not only limited to language, as is apparent in the simple fact that Adam’s eyes are “opened” upon coming to this high paradise wherein he could then see that which was forbidden to him before the fruit. This lofty spot, then, gave God a role to play in the story as well as a prospect from which he may view all of his creation. Just like in *Poly-Olbion*, then, the “Mountain is King” quite literally demonstrates how mountains can be seen very much like contemporary thrones, a high spot upon which the master can view the world and his dominion. Power then must be vested in these places, and it is power reserved for only certain monarchs. This idea of clearly delineating power gives further credence to notion of liminality, as the practice of a clear delineation of power and authority with particular places allows for a type of separation between either the profane and the sacred or that which has something and that which does not. For Milton, mountains – at least in this allegorical tale – work similarly, which gives credit to

the fact that this is a widespread idea at the time, at least for the educated. It could even be that this elitism *allows* for this clear delineation.

Not only that, but Milton also used these high places to teach lessons about sacredness. Elsewhere in the poem, he refers to the “Mount of Paradise” numerous times. Likewise, in another section, when discussing the flood, Milton clearly speaks of mountains as they pertain to divine intervention and providence:

Of Heav'n set open on the Earth shall powre
 Raine day and night, all fountaines of the Deep
 Broke up, shall heave the Ocean to usurp
 Beyond all bounds, till inundation rise
 Above the highest Hills: then shall this Mount
 Of Paradise by might of Waves be moovd
 Out of his place, pushd by the horned flood,
 With all his verdure spoil'd, and Trees adrift
 Down the great River to the op'ning Gulf,
 And there take root an Iland salt and bare,
 The haunt of Seales and Orcs, and Sea-mews clang.⁷¹

Here then there is mention of the Mount of Paradise as well, though it interestingly seems to reference the idea that God's Mount of Paradise will replace that which is inundated by the Flood. But this does not mean that this particular mountain is more holy than another place, as Milton cautiously advises us:

To teach thee that God attributes to place
 No sanctitie, if none be thither brought
 By Men who there frequent, or therein dwell.⁷²

In this warning, there is further convincing evidence that the location of sacredness in particular places, which Milton clearly sees as a relic of an antiquated Catholic faith, should be forgotten, for the simple fact that no particular place has special significance over another. Rather, Milton's view, like many of his contemporaries,

⁷¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 506.

⁷² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 506.

signals the continuing changes and evolution toward ideas that have variously been interpreted as a “secularization of place” and, that which I attest to more clearly here, a reorientation of sacredness. Or, as Walsham refers to it, one might consider the process to “be said to have redefined rather than wholly undermined the notion of sacred space” for the simple fact that divinity still had an association with places, but it was a much different association than before.⁷³ This is quite different from Coryat’s more relaxed perspective on the relics and antiquaries that he found along his journey and it demonstrates that a wide variety of perspectives exists, even within the educated elite of the period.

There is one additional note about Milton deserving attention before moving on. Unlike Coryat or Evelyn, Milton, at least in his work pertaining to *Paradise Lost*, it seems clear that Milton did not journey to mountains to experience them when gaining inspiration for his poem. Thus, clear distinctions here should be drawn about one important factor when considering how the educated and elite of England understood mountains: the difference between imagined mountains and experienced mountains. Obviously this dichotomy is itself only so useful, as one’s experience in mountains is culturally constructed, at least to some extent, and thus even a tale of the mountains written via a firsthand account may often tell us more about the person and the culture in which they are living rather than about the mountain itself. Nonetheless, as alluded to previously, this distinction helps account for the diversity of writing related to mountains in the seventeenth century. Nicolson hinted at this in her work, stating that during the period just prior to the Early Modern period, “allegorization, abstraction, and personification so overshadow realism that the characteristic mountain imagery of the

⁷³ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 251.

early seventeenth century is little more than a series of conventional stereotypes.”⁷⁴

While stereotype might be a fitting word, all of the previous evidence also demonstrates something more complex than that, especially when it comes to the abundance of evidence about mountain experience. Rather, actual experience in mountain places does create distinct associations with divinity and mountains in a way that literature, poetry, and songs do not. This difference will be explored in more depth throughout this text.

Monte Pientio was not John Evelyn’s only mountain experience beyond the Alps. After traveling and experiencing the cosmopolitan culture of Naples, Evelyn opted to climb Mt. Vesuvius, the famous volcano, and explored the surrounding volcanic region. Crawling and scrambling to the summit, but not before collecting some rocks as specimens, Evelyn successfully summited the peak. He considered it to have “one of the goodliest prospects in the world” and, because of this, he stated that “nothing can be more delightful” than this prospect. Laying down on the edge of the crater, he gazed in and examined the interior crater and recalled the tale of Pliny perishing therein.⁷⁵ His commentary on Vesuvius reflects his position on Naples as a whole, which is that he generally expressed enthusiasm and delight for the area, astounded as he was by the antiquarian history of the place. Thus, most references to religiosity were set in this context. Vesuvius’ nearness to the city, too, played a role in this, as well as its accessibility.

And while no religious connections, outside a few around the mountain regarding history and the many tremendous chapels that he found in Naples (some of the most wondrous, he added), the connections between religiosity and mountains come not from

⁷⁴ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 50.

⁷⁵ Evelyn, *Diary*, 152.

Vesuvius but his travels along the other mountains of the region, all of which were volcanic and fascinating to Evelyn. One of these mountains was “exceedingly fruitful in vines” while others sequestered deposits of rare minerals.⁷⁶ One additional destination deserves a mention, though its association more fascinated Evelyn than has a direct corollary with divinity per se. After climbing a hill “smoking with heat like a furnace” Evelyn’s party approached the mountains called by the Greeks “Leucogaei,” where Hercules killed the Giants. Departing this hill, they entered a space known as the Court of the Vulcan along its side, a valley with steep side walls from the hills that spews various vapors and bubbles and where, apparently, locals came for healing. Somewhere along the wall, they found a hill of aluminum that Evelyn deemed deserving of the following comment: “I could not but smile at those who persuade themselves that here are the gates of purgatory...” Apparently followers had even erected a convent named for St. Januarius nearby, as they had reported “to have often heard screeches and horrible lamentations proceeding from these caverns and volcanoes.”⁷⁷ This association with hell and purgatory gives insight into the viewpoints of how at least some early modern Europeans might have seen hell, as a physical place upon which one could enter, much in the same vein as Dante. However, as is clear, Evelyn found this laughable, noting, likely akin to many Englishmen of the period, that hell didn’t work exactly in that fashion. Interestingly enough, nearby this volcano, Evelyn’s party stopped over in Pozzolo, the landing-place of St. Paul the Apostle on his way to Rome, so other religious associations certainly abound in this region, as does Evelyn’s fascination with its Greco-Roman history.

⁷⁶ Evelyn, *Diary*, 154.

⁷⁷ Evelyn, *Diary*, 154-6.

Besides John Evelyn, other authors and travelers of the mid-seventeenth century also had ideas of mountains that give insight into their relationship with religion. To give a fuller context of the mid-century period, it is worth considering a few additional sources here. Then I will connect back to themes across these and previously presented sources to demonstrate change and continuity in the period. To contextualize Evelyn, connect with Coryat, and branch off to Milton, it is worth examining works from just either side of the mid-century. As historians of the period are keenly aware, the tumultuous middle years produced unique writing, so examining the work on either side of the Civil War is fruitful.

Another poet writing at the middle of the century, John Denham, penned a poem that spoke well of the mood of this age. His famous “Cooper’s Hill” demonstrates the continuity in thought related to associations between divinity and mountains. Denham’s opening line hints at the previously mentioned distinction between experience of mountains and writing about mountains, something Marjorie Hope Nicolson first identified in her work that still remains an important distinction. Denham offers not only nuance but clarity about the association between divinity and mountains, stating:

My eye, which swift as thought contracts the space
That lies between, and first salutes the place
Crown'd with that sacred pile, so vast, so high,
That whether 'tis a part of Earth, or sky,
Uncertain seems, and may be thought a proud
Aspiring mountain, or descending cloud.⁷⁸

While less directly mentioning heaven or God, Denham clearly pointed to similar themes, mentioning as he did a crown and a sacred pile vast and high. To Denham, like many of the poets examined thus far, divinity had a clear association with height, even if

⁷⁸ John Denham, *Poems and translations with the Sophy* (London, 1668), 2.

only put to allegorical or metaphorical use, as is the case in the poem. But his association was not only metaphorical, for it was about a real place that he knew well. In this way, Denham's work began to blur the lines between imagined and experienced mountains, which requires us to engage with more nuance.

Furthermore, Nicolson claimed that Denham's poem was "filled with praise of monarchs and monarchy," which connects to *Poly-Olbion's* association of the mountain as king.⁷⁹ Like Evelyn and Coryat, Denham wrote favorably about the view from "Cooper's Hill," writing that "no stupendous precipice denies" a great view, "A pleasure, and a reverence from the sight." Along with this, Denham clearly drew on Arthurian and Antiquarian thought to praise the monarch, and connected it directly to landscapes, for "Nature design'd First a brave place, and then as brave a mind." But Denham did more than just praise monarchy, and the connection between this and religion is crucial. In one stanza, Denham wrote:

But my fixt thoughts my wandring eye betrays,
Viewing a neighbouring hill, whose top of late
A Chappel crown'd, till in the Common Fate,
The adjoining Abby fell: (may no such storm
Fall on our times, where ruine must reform.)
Tell me (my Muse) what monstrous dire offence,
What crime could any Christian King incense
To such a rage? Was't Luxury, or Lust?
Was he so temperate, so chaste, so just?
Were these their crimes? They were his own much more...⁸⁰

Denham placed another hill, with a chapel atop of it, in his sight. Its collapse served as the instigator of thought related to abuse of kingly power, in reference to King Henry VIII and the well-known dissolution of the monasteries. Denham continued the line and discussed how religion affected his people at the time, announcing "Is there no

⁷⁹ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 52-3.

⁸⁰ Denham, *Poems*, 8.

temperate region can be known, Betwixt their Frigid, and our Torrid Zone?” Making use of geographic language, Denham described some of the conflicts in the late 1650s, mostly from the emergence of radical protestant sects. Denham did not come to any firm conclusions except for the notion that extreme views were dangerous and destructive.⁸¹

The mention of the chapel on the hill highlights something interesting in Denham.

Though firmly a Protestant, but one who was born in Dublin, Denham likely had a unique perspective on the religious challenges of the day. Likewise, his poem as a whole denounced the civil war in praise of stability. But even more so, it gives insight into two key features of the relationship between mountains and religion that are worth noting here. First, that chapels had an association with high places, and, like kings and thrones, they shared this for many reasons connected to the elevation of divinity. This is clear in both Coryat and Evelyn’s accounts in the Alps, but those countries and locations were predominantly Catholic, while “Cooper’s Hill” was certainly surrounded by Anglican followers. Nonetheless, Denham’s more nuanced perspective toward these sacred places of former Catholic association helps bolster Walsham’s claim that the distinctions between places and faiths was not always as clearly defined as might be assumed.

But even despite this gradual dissolution of an association of divinity with specific places, mountains still managed to maintain associations with the divine, sometimes in particular places and sometimes in metaphor and allegory in imagined places, as demonstrated in Milton. Likewise, other works from the mid-century abound with similar resonance. For instance, when the priest Joseph Hall wrote about whether divine revelation was present in an earthquake at Lime, he wrote about mountains: “We haue oft heard of Hills couered with Woods, but of Woods couered with Hills I thinke

⁸¹ Denham, *Poems*, 9.

neuer till now... Wee are wont to describe impossibilities by the Meeting of Mountaines, and behold here two Mountaines are met... What a good God it is whose providence overrules..."⁸² Hall's work is interesting because it also blurred the line between real and imagined places, and it also placed the divine directly into the middle of this. While we do not know the particulars of the mountains he was referring to, it is clear that he was using rhetoric and language to describe a trend of the era: the unknowability of the divine. Additionally, he was hinting at providence in particular places, though not exactly the miracles of the Catholics and Papists, but rather the un-planned and often rarely seen divine intervention happening in catastrophes such as the one in Lime. Notions of divine intervention, or providence, during this period are well documented by Alexandra Walsham's work.⁸³ Likewise, associations between extreme weather events, including but not limited to Volcanic eruptions as but one example, abounded in the period and are well-researched by scholars.

Other poets of roughly the mid-century give insight that specific places have some value connected with heaven, though, and are based on direct experience. Anne Kemp, of whom little is known, wrote in "A Contemplation on Basset's Down Hill" in 1658 of the view that inspired her toward both the ancients and simultaneously the divine:

If that exact Appelles now did live,
And would a picture of Elysium give,
He might portray the prospect which this Hill
Doth show, and make the eye command at will.⁸⁴

⁸² Joseph Hall, *Occasional Meditations* (London, 1631), 141-2.

⁸³ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2003). See Introduction. In this work, Walsham outlines how divine intervention was a key feature of Early Modern England. She argues that, despite the changes occurring under Protestantism and in the influx of scientific thought and dialogue, notions of providence still held strong influence throughout the century, especially in regards to inexplicable events, though this varied by person. Likewise, Walsham demonstrates that ideas of providence were not simply held by Catholics but were held widely by many Protestants as well.

⁸⁴ Ann Kemp, "A Contemplation on Basset's Down Hill," in Todd Andrew Borlik, *Literature and Nature in the English Renaissance An Ecocritical Anthology* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 302.

Drawing upon the ancients, Kemp mentioned Elysium, the heaven-like place from Greek mythology reserved for heroes, and the place Dante encounters on his descent to Hell. In this case, Elysium can also be read metaphorically, representing a form of happiness, heaven, or other lucid state that brings joy. This joy, though, uses religious language, even if it harkens back to the deities of old. Interestingly, Kemp was noting something special about this place, only viewable from the prospect, which is the fact that “here are no smoking streets” or “howling cries” or “blinding of the eyes” all of which are likely references to the growing urban centers of Europe.⁸⁵ Here, then, is more evidence of the liminality of these places, situated as they were between the growing urban centers of civilization and the quieter and quainter villages of the countryside. Though no wild Alpine slopes, these regions represented a type of place with positive associations throughout the century. Because of this association with the quainter side of life, Kemp considered these places to be spiritually similar to Elysium, a type of religious refuge or heaven. Thus, like many of the Catholic contemporaries dwelling in the alpine accounts of Coryat and Evelyn, Kemp’s modest estates and views from the high hills offered a refuge from this civilized world that was encroaching on the more sacred spaces. And because of this, they served as a mediating force between these seemingly conflicting forces, at least in the eyes of the poet.

In a different and yet related way, one of the forefathers of Quakerism also gives us insight into the association between divinity and high places. George Fox, whose work has already been mentioned, made great use of metaphor in his sermons, and his theology was certainly radical for the time period. Beyond just metaphors and allegories related to

⁸⁵ Kemp, “A Contemplation,” 302.

mountains, Fox also incorporated the spirit of place into his preaching. For instance, one day at the Firbank Chapel in Westmorland, Fox took it upon himself to preach “on the Top of a Rock hard by the Chappel” due to the fact that the church was so full of parishioners, “above a Thousand people” to whom he “declared God’s everlasting Truth and Word” for three hours.⁸⁶ These types of experiences were not uncommon for Fox, and it was he who said, in imitation of the Apostles, that “God dwells not in Temples made with Hands.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, these places were not simply for preaching, and though God did not dwell in those temples, traces of other, differently evolved, forms of sacredness in place can be seen in Fox. For instance, at one point, he climbed up “near a very great and high Hill” called Pendle-Hill, because he was “moved of the Lord, to go up to the Top of it.” And since he did this “with much ado” despite the fact that it was “Steep and High” he was capable of seeing far, into the “Places he had a Great People to be gathered.” Stopping at a spring along the way down, Fox delighted in his experience of the topic which allowed him to see the wonders of all of the peoples the Lord delighted in.⁸⁸ Together, experiences that moved preaching outside and into new spaces, along with the prospect of individual religiously inspired missions to high places, make it evident that associations between divinity and mountains present in Fox echo those of earlier writers, despite the fact that Fox might be considered happening upon a threshold that will later occur more and more often: the notion of being called to the mountains or high places. Likewise, another evolving notion, already present in Coryat and others, of the displacement of divinity and sacredness from specific places into its presence in the individual is present in Fox. Additionally, Fox’s experiences are also indicative of the

⁸⁶ Fox, *Journal*, 74.

⁸⁷ Fox, *Journal*, 31.

⁸⁸ Fox, *Journal*, 72.

fact that divinity could simultaneously be present – in some form – anywhere, at least anywhere that there were believers. This fits broadly into two ideas from Walsham. First, that “the landscape provided an important locus and focus for collective Protestant activity” and that it was “also a forum for more intimate encounters with the divine.”⁸⁹ In fact, the latter point is demonstrated in nearly all mountain experiences mentioned here. The second idea is the notion that “the corrosive distrust of the immanence of the holy that underpinned these successive phases of godly reformation coexisted with the notion that the natural environment was alive with moral, supernatural, and spiritual significance.”⁹⁰ This significance is present here in Fox as well as many others. Like Walsham, I consider this merely a reorientation of notions of religion in landscape, rather than either a wholesale shift or outright destruction of all sacredness or association.

By placing experience as well as metaphor and allegory at the center of the discussion of mountains and religion, more fruitful ideas appear in the works of Evelyn, Fox, and others previously discussed. Likewise, these experiences reveal much detail about how mountains and religion were connected. And although some evolutions have begun revealing themselves, such as a general trend toward placing divinity within individuals, as expressed most sharply by George Fox and the Quakers, far more continuity than change was present in the works of the middle century, even up to and including Milton. Whether in allegorical or metaphorical associations of divinity with monarchs, thrones, or other elevated places, mountains almost certainly were used in this description, whether in 1608 or 1668. In addition, metaphorical associations of mountains as impediments, obstacles, or places of divinity can be seen in Southwell as much as in

⁸⁹ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 249.

⁹⁰ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 327.

Milton. Lastly, mountain experiences themselves varied greatly, with many people finding both beauty and terror in alpine places, but nearly all of them finding some association with divinity, often in connection with greatness, beauty, or even history. In each of these cases, a strong argument can be made for mountains as liminal spaces. Even in the exceptions, in the cases where divinity was less directly evoked or entirely revoked, strong associations with mountains as liminal spaces were often present.

CHAPTER 3: THE LATE CENTURY

In the fall of 1688, John Dennis crossed the Alps, following the exact same path that Thomas Coryat had eight decades previously. Crossing over Mount Senis, he remarked that, “I am delighted, 'tis true at the prospect of Hills and Valleys, of flowry Meads, and murmuring Streams, yet it is a delight that is consistent with Reason, a delight that creates or improves Meditation.”⁹¹ While crossing the Alps, Dennis demonstrated great appreciation for its beauty, as well as for its challenges. Tracing Dennis’s account and comparing it with Coryat’s offers a rare chance to examine continuity and change in the relationship between mountains and religion. Dennis’s account adds novelty to the discussion, as it is representative of its context, a Post-Revolutionary England – soon to be Britain – that was quickly evolving into a global superpower. John Dennis’s account of his crossing of the Alps will provide similar themes across the century. Other diverse perspectives from roughly the same period will also build an even more robust examination, so both are examined in this chapter.

For Nicolson, John Dennis was the character in whom she perceived the birth of the Sublime, as she clearly wrote she completed her story about the “Aesthetics of the Infinite.” A close reading of Dennis’s crossing, though, offers not just something new, but also something old. In fact, the inheritance from Coryat and others is clear from the language used to the items mentioned to the fact that, like Coryat, he completed the journey in a chair. Likewise, while changes were certainly present, Dennis had a perspective both similar to and different from that of his inheritors’.

Crossing in the cold month of October in 1688, John Dennis’s account of his alpine crossing wrote his account in form of a letter, written to a friend to describe his

⁹¹ John Dennis, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (London, 1693), 138.

journey there much like James Howell. Clearly inspired by his forebears, he made note of many similar places, though preferred to forego describing those “Towns in Savoy” and that “Rock of Montmelian” and instead sought to talk about the Alps themselves since his friend had confined him to doing so.⁹² What is foremost so interesting about Dennis’s account is the continuity seen when connecting his account to Coryat’s. Also like Evelyn, his inspiration clearly drew from Coryat, as he mentioned many identical features from an abundance of pine and chestnut trees to roaring torrents of water, to the various names and towns, and the abundance of chapels.

Like other travelers before him, Dennis appreciated the mountains from a distance, noting that rounding one precipice “gave us such a view as was altogether new and amazing.”⁹³ Like Coryat, he, too, mentioned dangerous journeys through narrow ledges and cliffs, describing them as they “walk’d upon the very brink, in a litteral sense, of Destruction; one Stumble, and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroy’d.” This, then, excited a “delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy” in Dennis, making him “infinitely pleas’d” and causing him to tremble.⁹⁴

Throughout the journey, it can be said that Dennis was more attentive to different features of place than some other authors were. For instance, Evelyn focused his alpine crossing on the capture of his group, while Dennis was similar to Coryat in his interest in although Coryat tended to focus on the human-made structures, such as churches and chapels. Nonetheless, this focus could be considered stylistic or merely because of the audience, who might have been interested in a landscape so vastly different from that of

⁹² Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 132.

⁹³ Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 133.

⁹⁴ Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 134.

England. It seems Dennis, like Coryat and Evelyn before him, was also curious about these places vastly different from his home. Other dramatic language seems to reinforce this perspective, both for Dennis personally and for the excitement at novelty he probably sought to instill in his friend, writing of “Mountains, whose high but yet verdant Tops seem’d at once to forbid and invite men.”⁹⁵ This suggests some interest in this idea, but also can be seen to suggest Dennis playing up the dramatic effect – or, on the contrary, his excitement for the place.

As “the mountains appear’d to grow still more Lofty,” Dennis retraced the steps of Coryat, ascending to Mount Senis by way of Chanbery, Aiguebelle, and eventually onto Laneburgh. Traveling late in the season – and, conveniently, at the height of the Little Ice Age – Dennis encountered far more frigidness than his companions. Ascending Mount Cenis, Dennis marveled at the view back to where he had previously come: “I could not forbear looking back now and then to contemplate the Town and the Vale beneath me.” It is here that he writes one of his more famous lines to his friend, stating that “‘Tis an easie thing to describe Rome or Naples to you, because you have seen something yourself that holds at least some resemblance with them; but impossible to set a Mountain before your eyes, that is inaccessible to almost to the fight, and wearies the very Eye to Climb it.”⁹⁶ Here, Dennis confirms his false perception that views of mountains, traverses of mountains, and simply being in the mountains were in fact still somewhat novel in the late seventeenth century; all three authors noted many inhabited communities on the route. Secondly, Dennis’s peculiar mention of this fact gives insight into something unique for this particular age: wonder at the natural world. Informed

⁹⁵ Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 134.

⁹⁶ Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 137-8.

through Physico-Theology, many of this period sought answers for religious questions in the natural world. This trend, Physico-Theology, oriented some thinkers toward discovering within the natural world evidence for the existence of God, or in other cases evidence for the existence of God based upon reason alone. Nicolson mentioned as much, placing Dennis in the shadow of Thomas Burnet, whose work, *A Sacred Theory of the Earth*, put mountains at the center of a debate within theology, religion, and the new and growing “scientific” thought. What Dennis wrote next indicates his position in this very theological controversy, and because of this, deserves attention for his contribution to religiosity and mountains. The connection between mountains and theological controversy is an important relationship to understanding the connections between divinity and mountains.

Like many before him, Dennis also contemplated divinity in connect with mountains during his alpine experience. Upon summiting Mount Senis, he continues writing to the same friend about his wanderings of mountains:

If these Hills were first made with the World, as has been a long time thought, and Nature design'd them only as a Mound to inclose her Garden Italy: Then we may well say of her what some affirm of great Wits, that her, careless irregular and boldest Strokes are most admirable. For the Alpes are works which she seems to have design'd, and executed too in Fury. Yet she moves us less, where she studies to please us more. I am delighted, 'tis true at the prospect of Hills and Valleys, of flowry Meads, and murmuring Streams, yet it is a delight that is consistent with Reason, a delight that creates or improves Meditation. But transporting Pleasures follow'd the sight of the Alpes, and what unusual transports think you were those, that were mingled with horrors, and sometimes almost with despair? But if these Mountains were not a Creation, but form'd by universal Destruction, when the Arch with a mighty flaw dissolv'd and fell into the vast Abyss (which surely is the best opinion) then are these Ruines of the old World the greatest wonders of the New. For they are not only vast, but horrid, hideous, ghastly Ruins. After we had gallop'd a League over the Plain, and came at last to descend, to descend thro the very Bowels as it were of the Mountain, for we seem'd to be enclos'd on

all sides: What an astonishing Prospect was there? Ruins upon Ruins in monstrous Heaps, and Heaven and Earth confounded. The uncouth Rocks that were above us, Rocks that were void of all form, but what they had receiv'd from Ruine; the frightful view of the Precipices, and the foaming Waters that threw themselves headlong down them, made all such a Consort up for the Eye, as that sort of Musick does for the Ear, in which Horror can be joyn'd with Harmony.⁹⁷

Carefully written, with the thought “that I have said too much,” Dennis highlighted both a very old and a relatively new experience in mountains as they connect to ideas of religiosity. His mentions of beauty, while overly exciting, were not in and of themselves new, though he did comment later to the friend that he hoped that his “Hyperboles might be easily here forgiven.” Even if hyperbole is taken into account, Dennis’s musings about the workings of the world – and the subsequent reflection of the divine in the works of nature – account for one of many examples of growing trends between an evolution of epistemologies that for many prior historians came to be known as the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. Here it is important for the historian to chart the exact novelty of this experience and idea, in order to demonstrate how novel it is. Nonetheless, Dennis’s writing makes clear that, at least within the ranks of middle- and upper-class society in England near the close of the century, discussions like these abounded. So much so, in fact, that Dennis took a firm side in the argument.

Examination of a few examples from Thomas Burnet will help to demonstrate this context more clearly, for he was the center of the large controversy upon which Dennis drew directly. Burnet’s controversy has been covered in much greater depth elsewhere, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to delve deeply into it; however, a few pieces of evidence from Burnet’s thought corroborated with others can demonstrate that while the notions present in natural theology were likely coming to a fuller fruition with Burnet,

⁹⁷ Dennis, *Miscellanies*, 138-9.

amidst the controversy, and through the Royal Society, taking a longer view allows for a different perspective of the evolution of these ideas. And it is this idea that clarifies connections between divinity and mountains, including how these notions of religiosity were also embedded in theology leading to an intellectualization of the ideas. For instance, in well-known excerpt from *A Sacred Theory*, Burnet praised mountains and acknowledged their clear connection to divinity, stating that:

The greatest objects of Nature are, methinks, the most pleasing to behold; and, next to the great Concave of the Heavens and those boundless Regions where the Stars inhabit, there is nothing that I look upon with more pleasure than the wide Sea and the Mountains of the Earth. There is something august and stately in the Air of these things that inspires the mind with great thoughts and passions. We do naturally upon such occasions think of God and his greatness. And whatsoever hath but the shadow and appearance of [the] INFINITE, as all things have that are too big for our comprehension, they fill and overbear the mind with their Excess, and cast it into a pleasing kind of stupor and admiration.⁹⁸

These mountains, “too big for our comprehension,” were certainly divine to Burnet. Even so, he considered them to be “nothing but great ruins.” But for these very reasons, he ventured to the places, not just to contemplate the Alps, but to experience them, since “nothing doth more awaken our thoughts or excite our minds” than this. According to Burnet, it was this very experience, the wrestling with the “sight of those wild, vast, and indigested heaps of Stones and Earth” that first brought to his attention the sense of their origin. Considering most philosophy of the time to be “drowned in stupidity and sensual pleasures,” Burnet sought to use reason to remedy this situation in which there had been “so little inquisitive into the works of God and Nature.”⁹⁹ It is clear that Burnet also inherited his association of divinity with high places, but he, like Dennis

⁹⁸ Thomas Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth: Contain an Account of the Original of the Earth, and Of All the Changes Which it hath already undergone, or Is to Undergo Till the Consummation of All Things* (London, 1697), 94-5.

⁹⁹ Burnet, *Theory of the Earth*, 95.

after him, brought the question of the origin of mountains much more to the forefront of a conversation than had any predecessor. For this reason, by the time Dennis and others crossed the Alps, the argument had not only been reconstituted, but it had also been placed at the center of a theological debate amongst the most educated men of the century. This centering of the concept at the middle of dialogue suggests a turn toward the intellectualization of mountains and landscapes.

Besides theology, the debate for Burnet was about much more than mountains and its implications were much greater. This shift is significant because the debates extended from mountains into much larger topics, such as creation, the nature of the divine, the destruction of the Earth, and even the limits and uses of reason. Besides this, or perhaps because of it, the debate surrounding mountains encompassed far more than mountains; rather, the real issues at stake were epistemological as much as they were theological or with regards to aesthetics. Various evolving epistemologies can be seen as syncretized, to some degree or another, in Burnet's *Sacred Theory*. But his viewpoints were certainly not the only ones of the day, as the hot debate that ensued demonstrated. Likewise, even within the Burnet controversy, and with a special connection to mountains, it is evident how these debates far exceeded whether divinity was particular to one place or another – but rather, how in fact divinity was to be associated with those places, either through creation, destruction, perhaps even in their relationship to humans.

In *Mountain Dialogues*, Dawn Hollis argues that Thomas Burnet owed more to antiquity and his predecessors than previously imagined. Specifically, she looks at how Burnet dealt with authority from three places mainly: divine revelation given in the bible; divine revelation as revealed in the book of nature and thus observable through reason;

and the authority of the ancients. With keen clarity, Hollis notes how Burnet actually relies much more upon antiquity than Nicolson and others have given him credit for, demonstrating how he, too, fits well within the boundaries of the various evolutions of epistemologies detailed by scholars of the Scientific Revolution.¹⁰⁰ This is important because it validates and confirms the recent research regarding the Scientific Revolution. Concepts of drastic change, similar in style to studies like those in the scholarship on the Long Reformation, have begun to be questioned. While there is no consensus on the scholarship as a whole, a few trends are worth noting here. As early as the 1990s, historians such as Margaret Osler were arguing for a redefinition of the boundaries between “science” and “religion,” especially during the Scientific Revolution, given the fact that “the differences between early modern and twentieth-century meanings concern both epistemic status and disciplinary scope” and thus, in the 21st century, we can also conclude that the terms are limited.¹⁰¹ Osler simultaneously argued that “the boundaries between science and religion are neither fixed nor impermeable” and thus during the period under examination here were much more complicated.¹⁰² More recent scholarship from Peter Harrison confirms the consistency of this trend for the last few decades. He argues that the terms often “distort what it is they claim to represent” and even that any time the relationship between the two terms is examined, it might reveal more about the author than the argument.¹⁰³ This nuancing of ideas during the period adds depth to this particular study because it allows the reader to consider just how “revolutionary”

¹⁰⁰ Hollis, “Authority of the Ancients,” in *Mountain Dialogues* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

¹⁰¹ Margaret Osler, “Mixing Metaphors: Science and Religion or Natural Philosophy and Theology in Early Modern Europe,” *History of Science* 36 (Spring 1998): 91-113.

¹⁰² Osler, “Mixing Metaphors,” 93.

¹⁰³ Peter Harrison, “‘Science’ and ‘Religion’: Constructing the Boundaries,” *The Journal of Religion* 86, no. 1 (January 2006): 81-106.

Burnet's ideas might be. Likewise, the clear distinction between "science" and "religion" that dominated older forms of historiography seems today to be dated. Historian of Science Ann Thomson describes this clearly: "It is a truism to say that rigid disciplinary distinctions were unknown at the period under study and can preclude a proper understanding of the issues and their implications..."¹⁰⁴ Thus, Burnet's ideas can be seen in a longer timeframe, but Nicolson's rigidity of measurement and focus on the "New Science" oversimplifies the matter. While new ideas were certainly flourishing, many of these had much deeper roots. And beyond roots, these very ideas often came in tandem with theological ones, as Nicolson demonstrates. Hollis's examination of Burnet fits within this wider scholarship and is connected with what is argued in this thesis: for far more continuity than previously considered and thus slower change, rather than abrupt change.

To test this thesis, it is worth examining a few older texts to see whether they give credence to the notion of a slow transformation. A first source that helps test this, and which simultaneously demonstrates much continuity of thought across the period, comes from Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*. In words spoken by one of the personified mountains previously mentioned, Drayton details an early perspective on physico-theology:

Tell vs, ye haughtie Hills, why vainly thus you threat,
Esteeming vs so meane, compar'd to you so great.
To make you know your selues, you this must vnderstand,
That our great Maker layd the surface of the Land,
As leuell as the Lake vntill the generall Flood,
VWhen ouer all so long the troubled waters stood:
VWhich, hurried with the blasts from angry heauen that blew,
Vpon huge massy heapes the loosened grauell threw:

¹⁰⁴ Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

From hence we would yee knew, your first beginning came.
 Which, since, in tract of time, your selues did Mountaines name.
 So that the earth, by you (to check her mirthfull cheere)
 May alwaies see (from heauen) those plagues that poured were
 Vpon the former world; as t'were by scarres to showe
 That still shee must remaine disfigur'd with the blowe:
 And by th'infectious slime that doomefull Deluge left,
 Nature herselfe hath since of puritie beene reft;
 And by the seeds corrupt, the life of mortall man
 Was shortned. With these plagues yee Mountaines first began.¹⁰⁵

Drayton, then, is a poet-muse of early Physico-theology, if his argument is taken seriously. Surely this highly influential poem would have been equally debated as well, but unlike Burnet's work, Drayton's was missing the context that helped bring about the controversy, namely the Royal Society and the political and institutional implementation or censoring of religious authority and doctrine. Thus, the poem escaped debate, unlike Burnet. One can hypothesize a few reasons for this, including the fact that Drayton's England did not possess a Royal Society dedicated to the educated discussion of theology, science, and history, very much unlike Burnet's England. Regardless, Drayton's excerpt shows that reading the "book of nature" had a much longer precedent than the creation of the Royal Society and the subsequent education and discovery that occurred through this institution and others like it in the latter part of the century. In addition, it also notes an argument very similar to Burnet's, in contrast to some of his contemporaries, though other examples of those can also be found. For instance, Guy Miege, in a geography textbook from 1682, argued that one of the characters in his dialogue was much "inclined to believe the greatest Hills were created at first as they

¹⁰⁵ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 135-6.

are.”¹⁰⁶ And while Burnet’s contribution is certainly unique in its extent and depth and clarity, and I think it very interesting to consider his work something of a pivotal or shifting moment, the notions that held together between mountains and Physico-theology extend much further back into British history, though they exist in different ways and contexts. Likewise, even at the time, the debate was clearly not settled amongst the educated, as Nicolson and Hollis contend.

Besides the oft-cited Burnet Controversy and its immersion in natural theology and its clear connections to mountains, other works from the period can give insight into other perspectives between mountains and divinity. I will explore a few of these below to continue supporting my thesis.

In one instance, as late as 1681, the poet Andrew Marvell referenced divinity and mountains in many of his works. For instance, in one stanza he refers directly to “heaven-daring Teneriff,” considered by some to be one of the tallest mountains in the world at the time.¹⁰⁷ Another poet, Charles Cotton, writing in the second half of the century and who was from the Peak District, spoke fondly of mountains:

Oh my beloved Rocks! that rise
To awe the Earth, and brave the Skies,
From some aspiring Mountain's crown
How dearly do I love,
Giddy with pleasure, to look down,
And from the Vales to view the noble heights above!¹⁰⁸

Though this specific stanza highlights his excitement rather than his contemplation, the context of the prior stanzas gives insight into its meaning as it

¹⁰⁶ Guy Miege, *A New Cosmography, Or Survey of the Whole World; In Six Ingenious and Comprehensive Discourses. With a Previous Discoverse, being a New Project for bringing up Young Men to Learning* (London, 1682), 71.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Marvell, *Miscellaneous Poems* (London: Robert Boulter, 1681), 75.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Cotton, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1689), 137.

connects to religion. Cotton also mentioned caves, trees, and other natural features. But the goal of writing to all of these was simple: Cotton hoped to “all his Maker's Wonders to intend.” Here is natural curiosity, partnered with great joy of these places, together with religion and a purpose for exploring them, which was to further seek divine creation, using the “book of nature.”

Two accounts from mountain experiences at the time are worth noting for their connections to mountains and divinity as well. For the purposes of expanding the set of authors to include places closely connected with Britain, it may be worth exploring the work of John Chardin, a French-born traveler who resided in England for a good portion of his life, due to the persecution of Protestants in France. His travels were well-known to the English and the English translation of his book came out with the French. Additionally, he traveled just a few years prior to Dennis, so his thoughts reflect knowledge of the same era.

Chardin made many journeys across the Near East, Middle East, and down to India. A few specific instances of mountain crossings from these journeys are worth mentioning, especially to compare them with experiences in the Alps. The first worth exploring is his investigation of Mt. Ararat in Armenia. At Chardin’s time and today, Ararat is considered by some to be the landing place of Noah’s Ark. It is well-known also that Armenia is considered the oldest Christian nation, so the mention of relics and antiquaries is not surprising, not to mention their proximity to the holy land and their connection with Ararat. Chardin mentioned all of this, and he particularly focused on the veracity of the story of Ararat. To Chardin, this mountain was “where almost all Men agree that the Ark of Noah rested” but he was disappointed that “no Body can bring any

Solid Proof to make out what they affirm.”¹⁰⁹ This reveals a growing trend of the century: a reliance upon reason, evidence, and empiricism, rather than faith alone or divine texts in isolation.

Chardin was a stalwart Protestant and his views of the Armenians and their stories of Ararat indicate as much; in addition, they also demonstrate that relics of the past and sacred places, even those mentioned directly in the Bible, did not necessarily hold more sway than another. For instance, many relics and idols were mentioned through his interactions, including the bodies of various saints located across the country. Many times over, Chardin referred to them as, “mere Idle and ridiculous Fable.” He considered the Armenians to have “nothing of common sense.” He brought to bear the same perspective on their vision of Ararat, recalling a story from the inhabitants of the inaccessibility of the mountain, for if anyone were to ascend to the top they were to not return alive. He considered this nonsense, stating to the contrary that “I should rather take it for a greater Miracle, that any Man should climb up so high. For the Mountain is altogether uninhabited...”¹¹⁰ Chardin’s staunch Protestant vehemence was on clear display, which gives insight into how far the notions had progressed by the latter part of the century. Given his immigration to England for religious reasons, this certainly makes sense, given the context.

For Chardin, this perspective on the sanctity of specific places was not given solely to Armenia; in fact, he experienced something similar in Georgia, though he was a bit more forgiving of the Georgians. But his interest in Georgians and their connections

¹⁰⁹ John Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indies the first volume, containing the author’s voyage from Paris to Ispahan: to which is added, The coronation of the present King of Persia, Solyman the Third* (London, 1686), 252.

¹¹⁰ Chardin, *Travels*, 253.

between religion and mountains was most interesting, and at one point he stated something that he found rather odd: “The Georgians, as all the other Christians that surround 'em to the North and West, have a strange humour to build all their Churches upon high Mountains, in remote and almost inaccessible Places.” Chardin was intrigued by this notion, which must be dissimilar from both England and France, and which is buttressed by the fact that he considered these churches to be relatively abandoned, since they “seldom or never go into ‘em” and this must mean that they had “hardly open’d once in Ten Years.” When asking the locals why they did this, he was met with the simple reply: “‘Tis the Custom.”” Chardin was then convinced, biased as he was toward the Protestant faith, that Georgians must make these churches in order to get rid of “whatever Sins they have committed.”¹¹¹ As with the churches in Armenia, Chardin’s perspective had a clear bias toward a Protestant faith that signaled a strong turn toward the abolition of idolatry, images, and, as he stated strongly especially in reference to the Armenians, monasteries¹¹². Chardin’s religious zeal seems more pronounced than the nuanced perspectives encountered thus far, revealing a range of opinions. Furthermore, it helps to give credence to Walsham’s claim that “impulses towards destruction and preservation and the processes of remembering and forgetting are often mutually reinforcing.”¹¹³ This point is evident when comparing Chardin with other adventurers to mountain places. Lastly and of note, in his work we see the same trend we have noticed with all the crossings of the Alps, which is the location of monasteries, churches, and chapels in high places. Chardin’s difference was that, at least when exploring the human artifacts of these

¹¹¹ Chardin, *Travels*, 193.

¹¹² Chardin, *Travels*, 252. In this passage Chardin expresses his disgust for Armenian Monasteries.

¹¹³ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 14.

places, he did not want to consider any of them in particular to be holy, even if they were mentioned in the Bible.

Another traveler of English residence but French origin is worth discussion here, too, if only for the fact that his work became extraordinarily popular in the decades to come. Interestingly, in 1695, Maximillien Misson crossed the same pass, over Mount Cenis and into Savoy, that Coryat and Dennis did, though he came from the opposite side. He, too, took a chair over the mountains, and very much like his predecessor James Howell, “found hardly anything remarkable in that part...thro’ which we pass’d.” and thus has almost “nothing to relate concerning Savoy.”¹¹⁴ Perhaps this is because, earlier in his journeys, he gazed upon the Alps near Munich and thought that “here is a matter enough of Astonishment, that any one should venture himself among the Cavities of such frightful Mountains.” Thus, to Misson, “nothing is more wild and dismal than these places.”¹¹⁵ Misson did give further evidence of monasteries, chapels, and other symbols planted in the mountains, though, like nearly all of his predecessors, and which included an Augustinian convent, a large crucifix upon The Emperor’s Rock, and, later in the Alps, a cross marking the border between Piedmont and Savoy.¹¹⁶

Though Misson’s perspectives related to mountain aesthetics were not necessarily kind, his work does give great credence, though indirectly and much like James Howell’s, to the idea that mountains are liminal spaces. For instance, he lamented when crossing from Munich that “there is no sign of any till’d Land” in these places and noted that “these poor people” had only goat’s cheese and fish as their main diet. He mentioned also

¹¹⁴ Maximillien Misson, *A new voyage to Italy with a description of the chief towns, churches, tombs, libraries, palaces, statues, and antiquities of that country: together with useful instructions for those who shall travel thither* (London, 1695), 255.

¹¹⁵ Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy*, 93-4.

¹¹⁶ Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy*, 96, 97, 254.

the selling of the stomachs of goats as an oddity. Clearly the place through which Misson ventured felt quite foreign to him. This point is further exemplified by an odd experience of religion he encountered there. Meeting a “Troop of Beggars” along the way, Misson’s group happened upon an impromptu performance complete with “a little Demi Devil,” someone with a “Beard of Moss” and many other characters. Apparently, given his account, they were reenacting the fall of man. Inquiring about the strangeness, Mission asked an old man in the crew if he was part of the performance, to which he replied, “that he was God the father.” Misson concluded, with stark passion: “Behind the Product of the representations which they make of the Deity!”¹¹⁷ Experiences such as this often enlighten historians to more about the person telling the story than they do about the veracity of the tale in question. It is clear either way in this case that Misson had encountered an oddity, a feature of a different culture which he had found strange, even offensive. This example gives some of the clearest evidence of the idea that mountains and their surrounding places served as liminal spaces to the mind of the cosmopolitan educated elite of England because they represented places on the boundaries of civilization and barbarism, divinity and humanity, and even sacredness and profanity. Here, for Misson, resided strange peoples with strange customs who ate strange food and whose homes were terrifying, monstrous, and foreign. And this is what seems to indicate the mediating quality of these places, at least in the minds of the men writing about them.

Nonetheless, Misson did mention mountains with a reference that that appears to be directly from Thomas Burnet’s book: mountains as evidence – or perhaps not – of the deluge. While visiting areas near Rome, Misson commented upon a phenomenon often written about by “Olearius, Steno, Camden, Speed, and many other Authors,” which was

¹¹⁷ Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy*, 95.

the abundance of Shells in the “several Hills of Sand stuff’d” full of them at Monte-Mario. These hills brought Misson into the same theological debate as mentioned previously; in fact, in this very stanza, he mentioned having received a dissertation that he “read with a great deal of Pleasure” from the friend to whom he was writing. It is very likely, given the date, 1688, that he received a copy of Burnet’s work – or at least a reply to it. Thus, even Misson commented upon this theological controversy and brought these shells, “whole Mountains of ‘em,” into a conversation about the Deluge and creation. Misson reasoned carefully and did not outright dismiss the initial claim, but he eventually concluded that, “The variety of the Works of God in all his Creatures is universally acknowledg’d, and the reason of it is plain. Thus, those Fossil Shells that are found in the Heart of Stones and Marble, were not made in vain...”¹¹⁸ Misson, clearly at the center of the theological controversies taking place in England, then, provided insight into the intellectualization of mountains already seen, with roots stretching back at least to *Poly-Olbion* and ignited most fearsomely in Burnet’s controversy.

It is important here to note that with Drayton, Chardin, Misson, Burnet and others, a potential trend begins to emerge across the seventeenth century in English thought regarding mountains. And though the Sublime is not the central feature of this work, it is intimately connected to it, stemming as it does from the conviction that Dennis’s “Sublime” was religious in character, which is Nicolson’s original conviction. As the work of James L. Porter makes clear, the Sublime as a feature of thought has origins deep in antiquity, not merely limited to a word but rather as “a concept and an experience, or rather whole range of ideas, meanings, and experiences that are embedded in conceptual

¹¹⁸ Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy*, 154-7.

and experiential patterns.”¹¹⁹ Nicolson mapped the idea down to Burnet in the seventeenth century and applied an “Aesthetics of the Infinite ” which in part helps to explain the changes occurring during the latter half of the century. An alternative explanation might also be one found in Robert J. Mayhew’s work on landscape and religious culture in the Long Eighteenth Century. Mayhew concedes that once “landscape came to be a vehicle for discussion of a large number of themes” which in this case means questions such as the origins of the universe, the motivations of the creator, and the principles of divine providence. Inevitably, it shifts the discourse on the sublime. This resulted in arguments in which “discourse *on* the sublime was overtaken by a discourse *of* the sublime,” which led to a “life less connected to its religious origins.” Misson further concludes that this led to an intellectualization of the natural world. It is this intellectualizing that led to changes, as he states: “Once landscape and nature had been intellectualized, it is not surprising that they became sites for a far broader range of intellectual debates.”¹²⁰ It is interesting to see just how much of a “debate” these seem to become. For example, contemporaries of *Poly-Olbion* seem to be unmoved by a notion, as no known “controversy” occurred from Drayton’s work in the same way that it did with Burnet. On the contrary, after the creation of the Royal Society, an influx of large numbers of educated elites becomes apparent, many of whom have taken the Grand Tour themselves, debating the origin of mountains—not only to understand mountains, but to understand the very real questions of theology. This conflict between divine revelation and revelation in the “Book of Nature” along with the authority of the Ancients are all at the center of the epistemological transformations and evolutions occurring in the period.

¹¹⁹ James L. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1.

¹²⁰ Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 43-4.

This gradual transformation is one of the most significant legacies of the connection between divinity, mountains, and religion in Early Modern England. Mayhew's work can situate the evolution of ideas of divinity and mountains in a way that clarifies how one potential trend regarding these ideas, at least in the mind of the educated elites, is a gradual shift toward an intellectualization of ideas of mountains. In this way, "science" is not displacing "religion" in any sense, as the previously mentioned scholarship on the Scientific Revolution also confirms, but rather, a sense of evolution is occurring, one that comes to fruition at the highest levels of society in the eighteenth century. It is obvious, though, that this trend has deeper roots and evolves more fervently out of its specific context: as the Long Reformation draws to an end and as educated societies such as the Royal Society began the dissemination of diverse ideas related to "Reason" that were proliferating amongst educated men of the age. This perspective is one that sees these less as causal or teleological and more as co-dependent, in much the same way that Peter Hansen has argued in relation to mountains and modernity. For Hansen, "Mountaineering did not emerge 'after' enlightenment—they arrived together." This togetherness, which Hansen goes on to call "entangled histories" are ones that are "mutually constituted."¹²¹ Here one can consider the growing emergence of enlightenment, scientific, and natural theological thought in the same vein. Thus, "Science" did not *cause* men to revel in mountains; they occurred simultaneously, with an intricate reinforcing and constitutive relationship.

Strong continuity across the century seems to have been the norm, even for – or perhaps especially for – Catholics in England. In an account written in 1678, John Arnold, writing about the Monmouthshire region of Wales, reported that "he hath seen a

¹²¹ Peter Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, 11.

hundred papists meet on the top of an high hill, called St Michael's Mount, where is frequent meetings eight or ten times in the year, as he is informed, Mass is said, and sometimes Sermons are preached there.”¹²² Hundreds of years old, the chapel known as St. Michael's Mount drew pilgrims from all over the region on pilgrimages to the summit of the mountain, known as Skirrd Fawr. Michael Drayton wrote in great praise of this mountain in the early century, proclaiming “That Skeridvaur at last” was “a Mountaine much in might...”¹²³ This feeling seems to have remained for the majority of the century, as Arnold's account attests. This was not the only account of the mountain and religion, either. Two other accounts from the latter part of the century attest to religious associations with this particular mountain. One John Scudmore, for instance, reported a very similar story to Arnolds, stating that he “saw very great numbers of people at their Devotions on the top of a high hill in Monmouthshire called St Michael's Mount” and here there was “a ruinous Chappel and a stone with crosses on it” that he believed to “be an Altar” and it was here that he had “seen people with Beads in their Hands kneeling towards the said stone” and was later “informed that Mass is often said there.”¹²⁴ Corroborating this with the previous account, there is strong evidence not only of a religious association with a particular mountain but also of a pilgrimage and Catholic holy site located atop this peak. Historian Michael R. Lewis confirms this association and details how Catholic rituals and rites connected with the peak continued throughout the century, including the carrying off of the dirt of the mountain as a means to cure disease

¹²² John Trevor, *An Abstract of several examinations taken upon oath in the counties of Monmouth and Hereford, and delivered in to the Honourable House of Commons reported by Sir John Trevor, chair-man to the committee for drawing reasons to be given to the lords at a conference to prevent the growth and increase of popery ; together with the account given to the House of Commons the 12th of April, 1678* (London, 1680), 14.

¹²³ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 65.

¹²⁴ Trevor, *Several Examinations*, 14.

or other ailments. Walsham confirms this statement and in a similar vein shows a holy relationship between this mountain and divinity because it was “said to have been cleft by the earthquake that occurred at the precise moment that Christ died on the cross.”¹²⁵

Likewise, Lewis argues that as late as 1688, local parish officials considered establishing a hospice because of the great number of pilgrims to the site. In addition, he cites a 1678 artifact which “testifies to the fact that continued and organized devotion to St. Michael’s Mount on Skirrid Fawr” was not an anomaly. This papal brief gives evidence of formal papal approval and recognition of the site as holy.¹²⁶ Skirrid Fawr, is not only evidence of the continuing resistance of Catholics in the country, but it also demonstrates the persistence of religiosity, sacredness, and divinity in specific places, particularly atop mountains and often associated with St. Michael. Likewise, this final example gives great insight into the “Vale of Teares” and its continuity, as expressed in the real-lives of Catholic followers, in connection with mountains. On the margins of society, but with great dedication, their devotion to a sacred place continued despite the destruction of chapels, monasteries, and relics. This last example gives great credence to the idea that mountains, often places of refuge, serve as liminal places, mediating between the divine and the human in British thought throughout the seventeenth century. Even, or perhaps especially, for Catholics, these places mediated between the authority of the state and the authority of the Pope and the divine. Placed as they were on the margins of society, much like their counterparts in the Alps, these chapels and spaces can be viewed with a sense of this mediating quality.

¹²⁵ Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 196.

¹²⁶ Michael R. Lewis, “The Pilgrimage to St. Michael’s Mount: Catholic Continuity in Wales,” *Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History* 8 (January 1991): 58.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the contours of continuity in English thought between mountains and divinity have been traced. From Coryat, who traveled with great curiosity, to Dennis, who marveled at the wonders of the peaks, through John Evelyn, arrested on an Alpine pass, all of the sources presented here demonstrate the complexity of early modern mountain engagement and thought as they pertain to divinity. It is also clear that throughout the seventeenth century, educated English writers associated mountains with divinity. This association was often in the form of allegory and metaphor, but it also existed in other ways. Beyond just metaphor, Englishmen also experienced mountains, and these mountain experiences were just as diverse; in addition, they just as often evoked religious language, feelings, or description as well, often positively. This demonstration of a longstanding tradition of a relationship helps to nuance the grand theory put forth by Marjorie Hope Nicolson. It does this specifically by demonstrating that each experience can be viewed in different contexts, specifically with relation to the political, economic, and especially religious upheavals of the seventeenth century. Doing so allows the reader to trace continuity and change across the landscape more generally. While not focusing specifically on the Sublime, this essay gives credence to the idea that “roots” of the Sublime can be traced much farther back, as mountains have had an association with divinity for quite some time. If the Sublime is religious, then traces of it can be identified throughout the century. Likewise, this wide variety of mountain experiences and the diversity of expression about mountains makes a simplistic dichotomy stand on shakier ground. Furthermore, moving beyond just aesthetics to examine other aspects of culture, especially including those culturally constructed notions

of relationships with mountains as they are connected with religion, gives much greater insight into how men of the seventeenth century interpreted, interacted with, or otherwise thought of mountain landscapes. It is clear that they considered these landscapes to have associations with divinity, either from personal experiences there or through use of language that painted high places as close to divinity, or through associations of mountains with places from antiquity which were often religious in connotation. Of course, they also considered mountains metaphorically and allegorically as well, writing about mountains of sin or grief or about mountains as impediments to societal or human progress. This diversity gives credence to the notion that mountains were much more than just gloomy or glorious but were, in fact, immensely complex.

Additionally, the claim that mountains in the seventeenth century can be seen as liminal spaces is not only a novel interpretation and explanation of the evidence given here, but it is also an idea with immense implications. For example, if continuity of this can be traced through the eighteenth century, then new interpretations of the development of the Sublime and of many notions at the root of environmental philosophy might become more apparent. For instance, if mountains continued to serve as liminal spaces in that period, we might interpret the “shift” that occurred toward their appreciation to be one of a gradual relocation and appreciation of liminality. In a different way, scholarship on the connection between mountains and imperialism may also find this framing fruitful if we consider mountains liminal spaces that mediate between various authorities and powers. Likewise, if these spaces were mediated by authorities of this era or subsequent eras, then new ideas or explanations regarding the British imperial age

and “Golden Age” of Alpinism, both of which occurred in the nineteenth century, might be better examined or explored. Dialogue with this notion of mediation can also continue with other interdisciplinary scholars from various disciplines, such as geography and anthropology. Indeed, an even deeper explanation or interpretation might be offered from one of these fields when successfully integrated with the historical evidence.

Additionally, corroboration with other material may continue to be fruitful as well, making up for some of the limitations of the scope of this work. Whether through an investigation of Dutch landscape art that has religious associations or through a more in-depth examination of geographical and cosmographical texts, other scholars can build on this argument in a way that will continue to add to our understanding of the complexities of the Early Modern World. Likewise, scholarship identifying the English or European relationship with mountains as the European empires slowly expanded across the world may also be a fruitful avenue of exploration. This might be especially interesting to consider when Europeans encountered the diverse peoples of the Americas and Asia and to hypothesize whether those trends helped bring about novel ideas or syncretism.

Likewise, this work has added to the recent scholarship of Hollis, Konig, Koelb and others as it pertains to mountains over the course of the *Longue Duree*. In this way, it can be seen as a supplement to the recently published *Mountain Dialogues*. In another way, it takes this study of mountains and the study of cultural history and seeks to bring them together. More broadly, it is attempting to

integrate environmental history with other subfields of history without losing any of the strengths of any of these fields.

With this new explanation and interpretive tool, we can begin to view notions of mountains and religion in the early modern world as complexly as we consider our own mountain ideas and experiences.

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three bookes: being newly corrected, and augmented in many severall places, with the addition of a table thereunto annexed of all the chiefe heads. Wherein is contayed an exact relation of the lawes, religions, policies and governments of all their princes, potentates and people. Together with the grievous tortures he suffered by the Inquisition of Malaga in Spaine ... And of his last and late returne from the Northern Isles, and other places adjacent. London, 1640.

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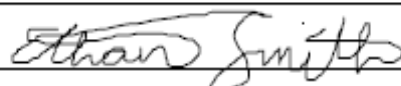
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