A Shared Exodus: Analyzing the Multi-confessional Consumption of Abraham Ortelius’ Map of Palestine

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Introduction

The 1608 Italian edition of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (“Theater of the World”) towers over the other atlases in the David Rumsey Map Center. It stands fifty-one centimeters tall and thirty-two centimeters wide, is luxuriously bound, and was undoubtedly made for patrons with pretty purses and good connections.¹ Abraham Ortelius first published the *Theatrum* in 1570 after assembling a series of maps that collectively unveiled an increasingly globalized world.² His systematic organization of cartography and ethnography was unlike anything that had been printed before, and today the *Theatrum* is widely considered to be the first modern atlas.³

Demand skyrocketed beyond Ortelius’ expectations. The Antwerp cartographer and his publishers eventually issued forty-seven editions that got progressively more comprehensive, and by the time the 1608 version came out, the number of maps had grown from a mere fifty-four to a monstrous 166.⁴ Ortelius inserted many of these additional maps based on his antiquarian interests; in 1579, he included an *Additamentum* (Supplement) to his atlas with three maps of sacred and profane history.⁵ This addendum eventually received its own section and name – the

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⁴ Matar, 68, 59.
Parergon – and reached a maximum thirty-nine maps by 1598 (fig. 1). My inquiry focuses on one of these antiquarian maps, a piece called Palestinae that depicts the Christian Holy Land and the day-by-day journey of Moses and his people as recounted in Numbers and Exodus (fig. 2). I seek to understand what the multi-confessional consumption of this map means in the context of the Reformation, a time when devotional material was typically created and consumed on confessional lines.

I argue in this paper that the consumption of Palestinae suggests neither absolute unity nor divided interpretation, but rather a middle ground: confessional coexistence. Before diving into Ortelius’ piece, this paper traces the history of Holy Land maps in the Reformation and discusses how the creators of these maps came from a variety of confessions. The paper then frames my argument by identifying that, as in production, both Protestants and Catholics consumed Palestinae. To understand this joint consumption, my analysis first turns to the similarities of Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the map, determining that this audience shared understandings of topography and history. My analysis then shifts to differences in consumption and suggests that these shared understandings were likely taken in different directions based on confession. In the end, Palestinae is unifying not despite, but because

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6 Melion, 49.
7 The full name of the map is presented at bottom-right: “Palestinae Sive Totius Terrae Promissionis Nova Descriptio Auctore Tilemanno Stella Sigenensi.”
9 I have written this essay acknowledging that what the map presents and how the map was consumed only subtly differ. Much of the time, what the map presents informs us on how it may have been consumed, and vice versa. I try to emphasize the role of consumption in “Shared Consumption” and “Differences in Consumption,” but I acknowledge that the latter half of this paper uses both consumption and what the map presents to make an argument for imaginative construction. For more on consumption, production, and circulation of maps, see Matthew Edney’s recent book, Cartography: The Ideal and Its History (2019).
Protestants and Catholics drew varied interpretations from the same devotional material, resulting in a coexistence of consumption.

_A Brief History of Holy Land Maps_

Ortelius’ _Palestinae_ has roots deep in the Reformation heartland and at the very beginnings of the movement. Elector Frederick Duke of Saxony embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1493 with the renowned artist Lucas Cranach the Elder. More than a decade after their return, Cranach crafted a gargantuan woodblock print of a Holy Land map to commemorate the journey (fig. 3).  

This map demonstrates three major characteristics that would come to define biblical cartography for the next century: preference for the Old Testament, presentation of a religious history, and emphasis on the pilgrimage of the Israelites in Exodus.

From its earliest stages, maps of the Holy Land were identified by Reformers as key didactic tools. Inspired by Cranach’s work, Luther demonstrated interest in placing a map of the Holy Land in his New Testament of 1522. Philip Melanchthon, working closely with Luther at the time, wrote to Caspar Cruciger that “Luther wanted to include a map of the Holy Land… to allow a better understanding of the text.” Though Luther did not end up using the map, the Zurich publisher Christopher Forschauer did in his vernacular Old Testament. A group of theologians and publishers followed suite: Jacob van Liesveldt in 1526, Willem Vorsterman in

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12 den Hollander, 140.

1528, and Hans Peetersen in 1535, all relying on Cranach’s woodcut illustration. A second generation of cartographically-inclined publishers expanded the range and diversity of these pieces. For example, the Geneva Bible of 1560 included maps of Eden, Canaan, the Holy Land in the time of Christ, and the travels of St. Paul, all in addition to the original Exodus map. Over the course of the early Reformation, maps of the Holy Land transformed from a patron’s novelty into a visual staple in Protestant discourse. Catherine Delano-Smith and Elizabeth Ingram attempted to explain this cartographic boom in their seminal 1991 study of thousands of bibles, concluding that the Exodus map’s “narrative, with its movement from bondage to salvation” resonated with “Protestants struggling to free themselves from what they saw as the ‘Egypt’ of a corrupt church.” Their thesis was succinct, powerful, and would come to define modern scholarship for a generation: “The history of maps in Bibles is part of the history of the Reformation.”

Abraham Ortelius probably did not engage with Exodus maps in the same vein as Protestants seeking spiritual salvation from a malicious church. At least ostensibly, the Antwerp mapmaker was Catholic. Ortelius trained as an illuminator of maps at Antwerp’s Guild of Saint Luke in 1547 before making contact with the prolific and influential Gerard Mercator. Ortelius soon established a business trading antiquarian paraphernalia and even made historical maps of his own that depicted the Roman Empire and Egypt. After the almost instant success of the

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14 Delano-Smith and Ingram, xxii.
15 Delano-Smith and Ingram, xxiii.
17 Delano-Smith and Ingram, Maps in Bibles, 1500-1600, xxiii–xxiv.
18 Delano-Smith and Ingram, xvi.
21 Depuydt, 2.
Theatrum, compiled thanks to Ortelius’ connections to humanists and mapmakers from across northern Europe, Emperor Philip II named Ortelius ‘his majesty’s cartographer’ in 1573.\textsuperscript{22} However, just as the mapmaker ascended the social ladder, Antwerp and the greater Low Countries underwent seismic political and religious shifts. In 1562, Calvin’s influence in the Netherlands began to rise once a “Belgian confession” was translated into Dutch, later becoming binding for Dutch Protestants after the Emden Synod of 1571.\textsuperscript{23} Meanwhile, as a religious reformation spread throughout the region, the Habsburg Crown attempted to assert hegemony over the Flemish nobility with plans to “establish a more elaborate – and controllable – Catholic church hierarchy in the region.”\textsuperscript{24} The resulting Dutch rebellion created an era of confessional and political volatility for Antwerp that amounted to spouts of iconoclasm in 1566, the sacking of the city in 1576, and decisive Habsburg retaliation in 1583 and 1585.\textsuperscript{25} But, despite this period of turmoil, Antwerp still remained the largest printing center in the Low Countries and the Theatrum succeeded beyond measure.\textsuperscript{26} Ortelius’ masterpiece was translated into German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, and English, attracting a readership that crossed territorial, political, and religious divides.\textsuperscript{27}

Ortelius crossed a religious divide himself when he based the map of Palestinae off of the work of Tilemann Stella, a follower of Melanchthon’s who devised pieces to “facilitate reading of the Old Testament.”\textsuperscript{28} Placing a Protestant biblical map in the Theatrum by an outwardly Catholic author complicates the original claim made by Delano-Smith and Ingram that

\textsuperscript{22} Depuydt, 3.
\textsuperscript{24} Cameron, 388.
\textsuperscript{25} Cameron, 388.
\textsuperscript{27} Pettegree and Hall, 794; Depuydt, “Ortelius, Abraham,” 2.
\textsuperscript{28} Melion, “Ad Ductum Itineris et Dispositionem Mansionum Ostendadam,” 50.
Reformers had a monopoly on biblical cartography.\textsuperscript{29} Certainly these maps remained key materials for many Protestant bibles, but Ortelius’ \textit{Theatrum} demonstrates that sacred geography was important to cartographers of many faiths, not just Reformed theologians.\textsuperscript{30} Like Ortelius, the Catholic humanist Benito Arias Montano composed an addendum for his Antwerp polyglot bible with maps of Canaan and Israel.\textsuperscript{31} In his study of this addendum, Zur Shalev writes that biblical maps do not necessarily embody a general Protestant ethic, but instead show widespread intellectual interests in sacred geography and humanist erudition.\textsuperscript{32} Shalev keenly demonstrates that by the late sixteenth century, these maps meandered between confessions because their creators were united by common intellectual values.

\textit{Consumption and Audience}

The creation of \textit{Palestinae} echoes Shalev’s argument for confessional unity by humanism, but Shalev overwhelmingly focuses on the production of maps. What about consumption? \textit{Palestinae}’s diverse audience may also tell a story of religious unity during the Reformation. At least 8300 copies of the map had been printed and disseminated throughout Germany, France, Spain, Italy, England, and the Low Countries between 1570 and 1640.\textsuperscript{33} The piece has been deemed the “prototype for the modern cartography of the Holy Land,” and

\textsuperscript{29} Delano-Smith and Ingram, \textit{Maps in Bibles, 1500-1600}, xvi.
\textsuperscript{31} Shalev, 67.
\textsuperscript{32} Shalev, 58.
\textsuperscript{33} Marcel van den Broecke and Deborah Broecke-Günzburger, “Index of the Plates of Ortelius’ \textit{Theatrum Orbis Terrarum} by Ortelius (Ort)-Number,” Cartographica Neerlandica, 2003, http://orteliusmaps.com/ortindexnumber.html; Imhof, “The Trade in Individual Maps from Ortelius’s \textit{Theatrum Orbis Terrarum} after 1612.” After the death of Ortelius in 1598, his longtime collaborator Jan Baptist Vrients obtained the copper plates to the \textit{Theatrum} and printed new editions from 1602 to 1609. Vrients published both complete atlases and individual maps, many of which slipped into other atlases and collections across Europe. Imhof, 52.
surprisingly, it resisted serious modification between its publications. Even though the 1608 Italian *Theatrum* is a distinctively Catholic artifact with its dedication to Pope Clement VIII, its map of *Palestinae* perfectly mirrors those in other vernacular translations of the *Theatrum*, including a 1608 English version. With the exception of minor differences in text, typesetting, and coloring, the same holds true for the seventeen other editions of *Palestinae* that I have examined. In effect, the same map of the Exodus was widely disseminated across a multi-confessional Europe.

To illustrate the religious diversity of this audience with specifics, we can tap into Ortelius’ humanist networks. The *Album Amicorum*, a signature book that Ortelius passed throughout his circles, indicates that George Braun (a Catholic antiquarian), Philip Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde (a Calvinist polemicist), and Janus Dousa (an ostensibly Protestant noble) all praised the *Theatrum*. Benito Arias Montano also inspired and likely viewed many of the

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35 “Theatro Del Mondo - David Rumsey Historical Map Collection,” David Rumsey Map Collection, 2019; Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Abrahami OrtelI Antuerp. Geographi Regii. The Theatre of the Vvhole World: Set Forth by That Excellent Geographer Abraham Ortelius*, trans. William Bedwell, 2nd ed. (London: Officina Plantiniana, 1608), Image 248. When citing the English translation of the atlas, I indicate image number as opposed to page number for easier navigation using EEBO. Based on the versions of the map I have observed from 1570-1608, I believe most if not all copies of the map are printed in Latin.  
36 Thirteen of these derive from Marcel van den Broecke and Deborah van den Broecke-Günzburger’s database project. Out of seventeen *Theatrum* atlases in their collection, thirteen included a version of *Palestinae* (labelled Ort170/171/172). The four atlases that did not include the map were 1571 Dutch, 1595 Latin, 1598 French, and 1602 Spanish editions. It appears that all copies in the collection before the 1595 Latin edition have a different typesetting, include a small compass at mid-right, and have a text other than an excerpt of Deut. 8 in the top-left cartouche (see below). The four other editions I cite as having the map are two 1570 Latin editions in the Library of Congress, a 1574 Latin edition owned by Andreas Donelli, and the first English edition published by John Norton and John Bill in 1606 (see bibliography).  
37 EMLO has catalogued 541 letters written both to and from Ortelius ranging from 1556 to 1598. We know that Ortelius participated in a broad network that included William Camden, Richard Hakluyt the Elder, Thomas Penny, William Charke, and Humphry Lwyd. Joost Depuydt is currently reconstructing this substantial Republic of Letters. See bibliography for URL’s to the letters cited below. Joost Depuydt, “The Correspondence of Abraham Ortelius,” Early Modern Letters Online, accessed December 12, 2019, http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?catalogue=abraham-ortelius.  
pieces of the *Parergon*. William Camden, a staunch supporter of Queen Elizabeth and the first chorographer of the British Isles, probably acquired a copy of the *Theatrum* after receiving a collection of works by Ortelius in 1602. A letter from 1630 tells us that Gerardus Joannes Vossius, a humanist scholar of Calvinist origins, also had acquired works by Ortelius. Publisher information for the atlas may also give us some clues. For example, John Norton and John Bill, committed Protestants, printed the first 1606 English translation of the *Theatrum* and followed up with a 1608 version that included *Palestinae*. In addition, the names of some atlas owners appear on introductory pages, including that of an “Andreas Donelli” who was probably the Catholic scion of a noble Bolognese family. This handful of readers confirms that the atlas’ audience attained considerable wealth, led humanist discourses, and spanned the confessional spectrum from Catholic to Anglican to Calvinist. This wide readership forces us to consider

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39 Shalev, “Sacred Geography, Antiquarianism and Visual Erudition.”
44 It should be noted that these are only the readers we know about. There may have been more readers of different backgrounds that we cannot confirm, likely because they did not participate in these same networks. Also note that
what the map of *Palestinae* presents about the faiths of its consumers. What were the religious understandings that were powerful enough to bring Protestants and Catholics to the same devotional material?

*Shared Consumption*

Influenced by the humanist erudition of the day, Protestants and Catholics jointly appreciated how *Palestinae* precisely organized biblical knowledge. The map’s epistemology begins with the toponym. It uses these place names to meticulously locate the events of the Exodus on earth (a sacred topography) and in a chronology (a religious history), a framework for thinking about the biblical past that Ortelius’ multi-confessional audience could agree on.45

“Petra,” “Betlehem,” “Tripolis” – place names that embody moments in the bible compose *Palestinae*. In fact, forty-two of them track the route of the Exodus that begins at “Raemses” and ends at “Jericho.” The toponym “Raemses” reminds the reader of the moment when “the children of Israel departed from Raemses… with a mighty hand, in the sight of all the Egyptians.”46 Meanwhile, “Jericho” recalls the entrance into Canaan, where God says unto the Israelites, “I have given it you for a possession.”47 “Raemses” symbolizes the wickedness of captivity and the triumph of liberation; “Jericho,” in turn, embodies deliverance and moral

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45 The ability for a map to fill in the imaginative void that scripture leaves behind resonates with Erich Auerbach’s seminal introduction to *Mimesis*, “Odysseus’ Scar.” Auerbach writes that much of the story of Isaac’s sacrifice is kept in the background; “time and place are undefined and call for interpretation,” thus engaging the audience in a way that foreground-dictated writing does not. The map offers a foreground to the biblical narrative, completing a dialogue between Bible and exegete that is made possible through scripture’s ambiguity, its “call for interpretation.” Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.


47 Num. 33:53.
righteousness in contrast to all that came before. Similarly, the explanatory to *Palestinae*
connects every major place name to their appearance in scripture. Consider the account of Egypt:

> Egypt is very often mentioned in the holy Scripture: and the places where it is spoken of, are very famous and memorable: Gehon, that is, as some do expound, Nilus, Gen.2.13. Bethshemesh, the Sunnes house, Heliopolis the Greekes call it, Gen.41. and 46. ESA.19. This also is called On, Ezech.30. Gessen or Gosen a country or province of Egypt, Gen.45.47.50. Exod.9 Phitom, Exod. 1. A city of stone stituate[d] upon Nilus. This the Israelites were forced to build.48

The first sentence summarizes the passage: to unveil “the places where [Egypt] is spoken of” by expounding upon their scriptural presence and their moral importance. We are reminded that “Gessen” surfaces in “Gen.45.47.50. Exod.9,” that “Heliopolis” lives in “Gen. 41. and 46,” and that “Phitom” is the city where “the Israelites were forced to build.” Ortelius uses these toponyms to precisely locate their scriptural associations on the map, and therefore somewhere in space and time.

Beginning with the perspective of space, we find that the toponyms of the Exodus encampments tightly encapsulate locations from Numbers 33. At the sixth encampment, the Elim of “twelve fountains of waters, and seventy palm trees” is reflected with a patch of palm trees and pools that emerge from the map.49 At the twentieth encampment, where they “camped in the Mountain Sepher,” the toponym “Sepher mons” levitates above a mountain.50 The topography of *Palestinae* provides an exact visual reference for the places articulated by the Old Testament. Much of the spatial precision of this map also derives from the surrounding coordinate plane and the four different scales at bottom-right, allowing Ortelius’ audience to reduce biblical toponyms

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49 Num. 33:9.
50 Num. 33:23. Interestingly, “Sepher mons” appears twice on the map: once at the encampment “20” and again at a nearby mountain.
to abstracted locations.\textsuperscript{51} These mathematical trappings suggest that every toponym’s scriptural component can be squarely located on earth.\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Palestinae} thus offers its audience a precise moral landscape that turns the nebulous and non-visual Holy Land into a tangible space.\textsuperscript{53}

Ortelius, his Protestant progenitors, and his audience all celebrate this topographic precision. Georg Braun wrote in his own \textit{Civitates orbis terrarum} that “so powerful is the knowledge of place instilled by the topographer, that he transforms \textit{peregrinus} [traveler] into an \textit{hospes} [native], imbuing the foreigner with all the privileged information held by the local inhabitant.”\textsuperscript{54} Braun identifies that the topographer instills a “knowledge of place” that turns distant locations into experienced phenomena, reflecting \textit{Palestinae}’s own exactness. On the opposite side of the confessional spectrum, Nicolas Barbier and Thomas Courteau, the original printers of the maps in the French vernacular bible of 1559, explained that their pieces “would present as if living before the eyes of those who find it difficult to imagine and consider the words [of scripture] by themselves.”\textsuperscript{55} Ortelius himself wrote in the opening passages of the \textit{Theatrum} that “when we have acquainted ourselves somewhat with the use of these Tables or Mappes... whatsoever we shall read, these Chartes being placed, as it were certaine glasses

\textsuperscript{51} To further aid with locating toponyms, multiple versions of a name (like “Heliopolis” and “Bethsemes”) are presented on the map. It also appears that not all locations mentioned in the explanatory are presented on the map. For example, “Phitom” is nowhere to be found.

\textsuperscript{52} For a fascinating modern analogue to these early modern moral landscapes, see Keith Basso’s \textit{Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache} (1996). Basso explains how Apache conceptions of morality and wisdom become articulated through a shared cultural vocabulary of toponyms. I am indebted to Basso’s ethnography for inspiring much of the language and word choice in this paper.

\textsuperscript{53} Consider also Jerry Brotton’s interpretation of the Hereford Mapamundi (c. 1300): “It is a map shaped by its religious history connected to specific places, rather than geographical space. The map offers the faithful a depiction of scenes from the Creation, the Fall, the life of Christ and the Apocalypse in an image of the vertical progression of Christian history from top to bottom in which they could grasp the possibility of their own salvation.” Although the Mapamundi and Ortelius’ \textit{Palestinae} completely differ in presentation and precision, they create moral-historical landscapes by recounting specific place names. Furthermore, they remain true to the concept of \textit{ductus} – that the viewer enhances their faith by following an itinerary or a progression through those places. The medieval and early modern versions of pilgrimage maps operate in surprisingly similar ways. Jerry Brotton, \textit{A History of the World in 12 Maps} (New York: Viking Press, 2012), 170.

\textsuperscript{54} Melion, “Ad Ductum Itineris et Dispositionem Mansionum Ostendendam,” 69.

\textsuperscript{55} Walden, “Global Calvinism,” 198.
before our eyes, will the longer be kept in memory, and make the deeper impression in us.”

Barbier, Courteau, and Ortelius all emphasize the sensory consumption of these maps through “the eyes” or “our eyes,” a consumption that makes real lands out of what is all too distant. At least in the interpretation of Barbier and Courteau, this consumption also makes scripture real and locatable. These Protestant and Catholic textual perspectives suggest that there was a unified understanding of topography as a window into reality. Therefore, it is likely that Ortelius’ confessionally-disparate readers jointly appreciated Palestinae’s precise sacred topography.

From the perspective of religious history, consider that the toponym “Raemses” exists not only on the coordinate plane, but also on the timeline. Each toponym, and thus the scriptural event associated with the toponym, is situated in a chronology that proves that the miracles of God can be traced back to an exact time. Ortelius emphasizes this orderly religious history in the explanatory:

Canaan, the most ancient name of this country was Canaan, which it tooke of Chanaan the sonne of Cham, whose posterity divided it amongst themselves and first inhabited it. Their names were these, Sidon, Heth, Iebusy, Gergesy, Heuy, Arky, Siny, Aruady, Semary, and Hamathy, Gen.10.15.16.17.18. Every one of these gave his owne name to that part of the country of Canaan, which he enjoied for his portion, and of them mention afterward is made Gen.13.14.15.23.24.25.27.34.36.38.49.50. Exod.3.13.23.34. Num.13.22.32. Deut.1.2.3.4.7.20. Iosu.2.3.5.7.9.10.11.12.13.15.16.17.19.24…

A sacred history progresses with the passage: first comes Cham, then his sons, and then their sons. This clearly delineated history also manifests in the flurry of biblical citations that make up a progression from Genesis to Exodus to Numbers, and so on. The chronological emphasis that pervades the explanatory appears on the map in the form of ascending numerals and toponyms along the exodus path. These numerals and toponyms constitute a visualized, logical progression,

56 Ortelius, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1608, Image 4.
57 See Shalev’s “Sacred Geography, Antiquarianism, and Visual Erudition,” and especially his discussion of Montano’s “erudite eyes.”
58 Ortelius, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1608, Image 247.
a characteristic of the map that also separates the piece from most other maps in the *Theatrum*. While Ortelius’ world maps might be considered “snapshots” of a moment, this Holy Land map represents the Exodus narrative at different times; “Raemses” does not exist simultaneously with “Jericho” even though both are projected onto the same spatial plane. Therefore, the map does not depict a time of the Exodus. It depicts the time of the Exodus. *Palestinae* familiarizes the reader with the ebb and flow of a complete sacred history, composed of individual events that can be exactly located relative to one another.

As with *Palestinae*’s sacred topography, this orderly religious history was appreciated by Ortelius, his readers, and his Protestant progenitors. Shalev writes that Benito Arias Montano followed a “strict historicism” in his *Apapratus Sacer*. The Catholic luminary diverged from other works in his time by insisting on the separation between the “Chanaan” of Joshua and the “Chaleb” of the subsequent Israelite settlement. For Montano, sacred history was arranged precisely and logically for the sake of humanist erudition. Though executed for different reasons, Protestant attempts at affirming scripture’s historicity follow a similar logic. When confronted with arguments against the literal truth of the location of Eden, Calvin published a response in *Commentary on Genesis* that posited that the two “lost” rivers of Paradise – the Gihon and the

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59 Num. 33:3, 33:49. Scripture identifies that Moses and his people departed Raemses on “the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the phase” whereas Moses “camped from Bethsimit… in the plains of the Moabites” at the end of their journey.

60 I prioritize the idea that this map represents all time in the Exodus because the path of Moses figures most prominently on the piece, but the anachronistic tomb sites of Pompey at the “Casius mons” and “Maria” in the south may suggest that this map actually represents all time in a historically-constructed “antiquity.”

61 Melion’s argument for imaginary pilgrimage follows this line of thought. The reader of *Palestinae* tracks a precise itinerary of “loci” that were previously sanctified by holy men, including Abraham, Moses, and Paul, in a meditative process of reenactment. Melion, “Ad Ductum Itineris et Dispositionem Mansionum Ostendendam,” 49.


63 Shalev, 63.

64 Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 167. The intentions between Montano and Calvin greatly differ. Calvin was concerned not only with affirming the historical validity of scripture, but also interpreting how God’s promise and relations with humankind have changed over time. For Montano, erudition is devotionally fulfilling; for Calvin, erudition becomes the means to support theology. Shalev, “Sacred Geography, Antiquarianism and Visual Erudition,” 11.
Pishon – had in fact turned into the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates. As Justine Walden explains, “Terrestrial paradise really had existed but was simply lost somewhere in the past.” Calvin also buttressed his explanation with a historical map, engaging the reader in the real and chronologically precise events of the past. Lastly, Ortelius follows this historiographic discourse in the opening passages of the Parergon, where he famously wrote that “geography is the eye of history.” The Antwerp mapmaker decided to separate maps of the Parergon from those in the Theatrum in 1579, thus clearly demarcating the past from the present. As expressed by Alexandra Walsham, the conflicts of the Reformation unleashed “study and writing of sacred history in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe on both sides of the emerging religious divide.” The textual evidence from the period suggests that two of the values of this historiographic boom – precision and chronology – were prioritized by Catholic and Protestant humanists alike. These shared principles indicate that Palestinae offered a sacred history that could be appreciated by readers from every major confession.

Textual evidence from some of the map’s closest admirers and originators support the idea that Palestinae operated on epistemic wavelengths that resonated in both Protestant and Catholic circles. The humanist value that these readers shared and the primary focus of this map was precision. For both Catholics and Protestants, precisely defining the distant topography and

65 Walden, “Global Calvinism,” 199.
66 Walden, 201.
ancient history of *Palestinae* made the Holy Land spiritually and ideologically close. The audience of the map used a common, *Christian* epistemology to begin their exegeses.

*Differences in Consumption*

Catholics and Protestants certainly approached *Palestinae* with a common way of reading the map, but important differences qualify this picture of unity. Disparate understandings of iconography, terrestrial sacrality, and imaginary pilgrimage suggest that Protestant and Catholic readers only shared this Christian epistemology to define the terms of their consumption. The sacred topography and religious history of this epistemology were then conceptualized differently across confessions. Devout Protestant readers of *Palestinae* most likely viewed the piece as a neutral tool for reflection whereas devout Catholic readers were free to appreciate the map as a substitute for pilgrimage rites.70

First, Ortelius’ readers approached the map with different understandings of iconography. Catholics of the Counter-Reformation preserved and even emphasized religious iconography as devotional material.71 Meanwhile, visualizations of the Holy Land juxtapose the general iconophobia in Lutheran and especially Calvinist doctrine.72 Justine Walden points out that the

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70 These are rough generalizations. In reality, we cannot know exactly if one’s confession corresponded to one’s practice, which is particularly seen in Beatrice Groves’ enlightening study.


72 I am careful not to extend this argument too far. Protestants did not simply eschew iconography and relic culture. In the words of Walsham, “we need to pay attention to the ways in which Protestantism engendered its own forms of material culture and how these were implicated in the making of a distinctive confessional identity.” Putting Walsham in conversation with Delano-Smith and Ingram may provide a fresh perspective on Protestant bible map production as an identity-forming activity. Alexandra Walsham, “Introduction: Relics and Remains,” *Past & Present* 206 (January 1, 2010): 23, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq026.
Marian exiles placed maps in the 1560 Geneva Bible despite working in an iconophobic environment, and similarly, the earliest versions of Palestinae were produced in a city that was ravaged by the 1566 Beeldenstorm only four years prior.73 Philip Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde supported and described the Beeldenstorm as divinely-guided; “these events were due… to the manifest providence of God who wanted to show how much He detests and abhors the abominable idolatry committed around these images.”74 For many Protestants like Marnix, biblical maps were permissible insofar as they were tools for contemplation on the religious past.75

Second, the readers of Palestinae likely approached the map with different conceptions of terrestrial sacrality, illustrated by distinctions in pilgrimage. In Catholic devotion, the Holy Land of the map reflected an actually holy destination with sacrality that could be tapped into in the form of grace.76 Catholic pilgrimage generally heightened during the Counter-Reformation as sites like Mont Saint-Michel swelled with visitors, confirming that much of Europe still viewed some locations as innately holier than others.77 On the other hand, the Holy Land of Palestinae presented a contradiction to Reformers whose pioneers had condemned the terrestrial sacrality of the world. Luther “disenchanted” the earth when he argued that pilgrimage to a relic site was a fruitless work that contradicted justification by faith alone, and Calvin wrote in a 1544 rebuttal

73 Walden, “Global Calvinism,” 197; Cameron, The European Reformation, 388.
75 Zur Shalev, Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550-1700 (Brill, 2011), 96. In particular, see Shalev’s discussion on Calvin’s interpretation of historical contemplation.
against pilgrimage that “Christ abolished all distinction of places.” Pilgrimage, however, was not completely scrapped by the Reformers. As Shalev contends, Calvin primarily criticized the act of worshipping relics but not the contemplation of Christ’s passion at different historical sites. This reimagination of pilgrimage as an act of contemplation as opposed to grace-conferring devotion surfaces in travelogues from Protestant laity. Shalev, for example, finds the travel account of the Lutheran Leonhard Rauwolf, who practiced “silent prayer and consideration of the historical and spiritual import of the holy places [of Palestine].” And although some Protestant English pilgrims traveled to the Holy Land and claimed to have experienced the holiness of Jerusalem, many were still likely to perceive their travels as a “solely spiritual journey modeled on the biblical image of the faithful as ‘strangers and pilgrims on earth.’” The Reformed readers likely imagined the Holy Land of Palestinae as a special site infused with biblical history; in turn, Catholic readers likely perceived the land as a truly holy space with innate sacrality, such that going on pilgrimage to Palestine constituted the “crowning form of European travel.”


79 Shalev, Sacred Words and Worlds, 96.

80 Shalev, 98.

81 Beatrice Groves, “‘Those Sanctified Places Where Our Sauiours Feete Had Trode’: Jerusalem in Early Modern English Travel Narratives,” The Sixteenth Century Journal 43, no. 3 (2012): 686, 684. Groves contends that many English protestant pilgrims differed from their Catholic counterparts only in name. These pilgrims would “relate the traditional pilgrim reaction of prayerful joy in the time-honored places, bring home relics, and record the dimensions of the holiest places.” As Groves puts it, “the belief that certain places were holier than others proved to be very hard to break.” Groves, 681.

82 Matar and Hayden, Through the Eyes of the Beholder, 10.
Third, the varied readers of *Palestinae* approached the map with disparate conceptions of imaginary pilgrimage, a type of consumption that a growing number of scholars claim was experienced by Protestants and Catholics alike. Melion argues that the maps of the *Parergon* guide their multi-confessional audience to contemplate the peregrinations of Church fathers and therefore take their own “imagined pilgrimages towards salvation.”83 Shalev joins Melion by stating that these maps carried this “literal and an allegorical function in both Protestant and Catholic biblical scholarship.”84 In regard to the Exodus map of the 1560 Geneva Bible, Justine Walden writes that “the map supplied the vicarious experience of pilgrimage, another traditional aesthetic-religious experience that Protestantism cast aside,” and August den Hollander argues that via Protestant and Catholic bible maps “each reader could, for example, make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land or Jerusalem.”85 This general claim for the rise of shared imaginary pilgrimage has three major drawbacks: the first being that it insinuates that the Reformation created a novel way to engage with scripture. In reality, vicarious pilgrimage had been a staple discourse in Catholic veneration for hundreds of years.86 Second, the claim does not take into account the substantial rise in shrine veneration during the Counter-Reformation, which complicates the idea that this allegedly joint discourse was redefining pilgrimage.87 Third, and most importantly, this claim does not correspond with what Protestant and Catholic readers of the *Parergon* say about

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87 Tingle, “Long-Distance Pilgrimage and the Counter Reformation in France.”
imaginary pilgrimage. Melion cites Georg Braun and Philip Marnix as discussing imaginary pilgrimage; Braun claims that the topographer of sacred geography “can prepare travelers to familiarize themselves with places they plan to visit” while Marnix “emblematizes the figure of pilgrimage, turning it into an elaborate impresa of his life’s vocation as suppliant.”

Both Braun and Marnix may have imagined a pilgrimage, but Braun’s was an imaginary pilgrimage in preparation for a physical one whereas Marnix’s was solely metaphorical. Montano joins Braun in this regard, having explicitly written that “his own map of Israel was intended to serve as a replacement for pilgrimage for those who could not travel and enjoy the memory of actual places.”

In the Catholic conception, imaginary pilgrimage certainly had a historical and contemplative quality, but it is also presented as a substitute for the actual rite that would have conferred grace; in the Protestant conception, the metaphorical pilgrimage stands alone, devoid of an actual site and solely rooted in historical contemplation. To say that Catholics and Protestants share a metaphorical pilgrimage does not capture how differently these imagined journeys may have been conceived.

In all likelihood, the only part of consumption that the readers of Palestinae universally shared was a fundamental, humanistic vocabulary of space and time. With these fundamentals, Ortelius’ readers perceived the map at different points along the spectrum of Protestant and Catholic interpretation, between a neutral tool for pious meditation and a window into a truly sacred landscape.

*Consumption as Coexistence*

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This balance between shared and separate consumption indicates neither absolute unity nor divided interpretation. Rather, this phenomenon is best described as confessional coexistence. It is not how these readers worship that unites them but that they incorporate the map into their devotional cosmos. Catholics who consumed a truly holy land used the same devotional material as Calvinists who may have believed that no parcel of land is more holy than any other. If we momentarily turn away from consumption and analyze the map, we can identify how Ortelius’ work makes this coexistence possible.

*Palestinae* allows for varied consumption by not imposing any other fundamental interpretations beyond a common epistemology of space and time, as outlined above. It plays a game of equilibrium, where it says just enough to attract a Christian audience and then remains silent so that interpretive differences have room to exist. This silence can be identified in the fact that the map and its accompanying text do not immediately bear a confessional marker; the piece also deals with the Exodus path, relatively uncontested territory in the Reformation, and comes out of an atlas as opposed to a translation of the Bible. When incorporating details about the Order of the Holy Sepulcher in his explanatory for the Holy Land, Ortelius went so far as to delete the anti-Lutheran sentiment from the Order’s oath. The author also highlights the reader in his crafting of a neutral theater. In the introduction to the *Parergon*, Ortelius writes that he and his contemporaries offer their own arguments for the location of Eden, a debate with confessional significance, but determines instead that he “willingly give[s] leave to the learned Reader, in his discretion, to take which him pleaseth.”

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90 Calvin, “Articles by The Theological Faculty of Paris,” 96. See also Melion and his discussion of Marnix.
91 Granted, the atlas did come in overtly Catholic and Protestant versions, but this may have been because the original *Theatrum* and its *Parergon* were highly customizable commodities that could be curtailed to Ortelius’ many audiences.
92 Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds*, 100.
elevation of the self, Ortelius quietly submits the *Parergon* to its readers and their own interpretations. By ambiguity and neutrality, the map facilitates the coexistence of its consumers.\(^9^4\)

**Conclusion: Consumption as Production**

Upon observing the audience of the map and the unifying machinery of the piece, the process of consumption appears less like a one-way digestion of material and more like a dialogue between map and reader. *Palestinae* begins to construct a space for Christian unity that transcends temporal divisions, and by consuming the map, Ortelius’ diverse readers participate in this construction. Regardless the variety of interpretation, each member of the audience engages in a private act of devotion that entails imagining and occupying an idyllic Holy Land.\(^9^5\) Employing an excerpt from Deuteronomy 8, the top-left cartouche of the map reminds its diverse audience that every Christian belongs to this space:

\[
\text{Dominus deus tuus introducet te in terram bonam, terram rivorum aquarum et fontium, in cuius campis montibus erumpunt fluviorum abyssi. Terram frumenti, ordei, ac vinearum, in qua ficus malogranata, oliveta nascuntur terram olei ac mellis. Ubi absque ulla penuria comedes panem tuum, rerum omnium abundantia perfrueris.}\(^9^6\)
\]

\(^9^4\) It is plausible that Ortelius made deliberately neutral pieces in line with the Family of Love. This pervasive sect taught highly individualistic spirituality. Just as viewing the *Palestinae* was an inherently private act that transformed the Holy Land into a moral landscape, made tangible from the comfort of an armchair, the Familists eschewed external rites completely. They accepted all – Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Reformed or Evangelical Christians – into their invisible church and asked that their followers conceal their beliefs and seek a personal relationship with God. See: Giorgio Mangani, “Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning of the Cordiform Projection,” *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 59–83.

\(^9^5\) In his monumental work *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, Denis Wood reminds us that “maps propose the existence of things.” Thus, *Palestinae* arguably proposes the existence of a Christian Holy Land. Furthermore, Hayden and Matar write that European Christians “emphasized how much they belonged to the land because the Bible of the land belonged to them.” Denis Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), 44; Matar and Hayden, *Through the Eyes of the Beholder*, 14.

Ortelius picks a passage that directs the utopic promises of God onto the reader (“tuus,” “te”). The multi-confessional audience collectively belongs to this land of “olei ac mellis,” and they belong in despite of a stinging political reality: Palestine had been controlled by the Ottoman Turks since 1516.97

In light of the military threat they posed to the Habsburg empire and its allies, the Ottomans were perceived as perennial antagonists to the Christian world during the time of Ortelius.98 By publishing *Palestinae*, Ortelius joined a Euro-Christian fashioning of this Turkish enemy. Nabil I. Matar has shown that Ortelius sometimes placed *Palestinae* right after a map of “Turcicum Imperium,” deliberately subverting Ottoman control by reaching into the religio-historic past and projecting Christian hegemony into the future.99 For consumers of the map, this proximity between the political present and the idealistic past imbues the act of reading *Palestinae* with violence. To imagine a Holy Land without the Turks is to imagine their downfall. From the vantage point of armchairs, the multi-confessional readers of Ortelius waged an imaginary war on the Turks by producing a Christian Palestine that transcended space, time, politics, and even their own confessional differences.100

The consumption of *Palestinae* defines something for the rest of the Reformation. By viewing the map, Protestants and Catholics participated in a collective construction of the past

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97 Matar and Hayden, *Through the Eyes of the Beholder*, 3.
98 In 1520, Luther argued that the Catholic Church selfishly kept money from indulgences that was originally meant to aid the war effort against the Ottomans: “everybody knows that not a cent of the annates, or of the indulgence money, or of all the rest, is spent to fight the Turk.” Luther utilizes the Turks as a background specter in his rhetoric, demonstrating to us the perceived power and terror of this specter. Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,” in *Three Treatises*, ed. James Atkinson, trans. Charles M. Jacobs, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 31.
that did not have to end in iconoclastic rebellion nor trials for heresy. Some objects were savvy enough to bridge the confessional divide with the equipment of humanism. Analyzing this equipment reveals that the *Theatrum* is a theater of coexistence and, more broadly, that our historiography of the Reformation might betray the realities of shared, Christian spirituality. Thinking about consumption also makes us reflect on production with a fresh perspective. Did the *Theatrum’s* creator intend for this unity? Perhaps Ortelius crafted his map as the refuge to all the division that consumed his town, his country, his world. Perhaps he imagined himself not as having mapped the migration of spiritual ancestors but as mapping a shared exodus.
Figure 1: Title page of the *Parergon* (1608) by Abraham Ortelius, David Rumsey Map Center
Figure 2: *Palestinae* (1608) by Abraham Ortelius, David Rumsey Map Center

Figure 3: A map of Israel (1508-1515) by Lucas Cranach the Elder, Wikimedia Commons
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