Fig. 19.1: Map over *The Lands of the Bible*, in Hans Julius Knudsen, *Bibelsk Geographie for Skoler og Familier*, 1858.

Erling Sandmo

Chapter 19

Paradoxes of Mapping: On Geography and History in the Teaching of Christendom in Norway, c.1850–2000

This chapter deals with the relationship between physical geography and the geography of biblical history as subjects in Norwegian childrens' schools from the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Jerusalem itself plays no significant role in the teaching of secular geography, and so the comparison rests on the general geographies of the Holy Land on the one hand and Palestine, eventually Israel, on the other. My aim is to compare representations of a terrain and a territory that is both physical and metaphysical. At this level, the difference between city and land is primarily one of scale, not of substance. The Jerusalem "code" is here a historical entanglement; a knot which may or may not be in the process of being untied.

The material here is maps in textbooks on two subjects: geography and biblical history. The history of the relationship between them is partly about separation, of subjects moving in different directions, but it is also a history of a paradoxical convergence: at the end of the twentieth century, contemporary textbook-maps of the Holy Land may have been unprecedentedly dissimilar to mainstream, geographical cartography, but their function is so traditional as to be almost archaic.

I am not presenting a systematic study. The material – textbooks on Christendom, biblical history, biblical geography, and religion – is enormous, and a detailed discussion is impossible within the framework of one chapter in a book. Interested readers should explore the existing literature in the field.¹ In-depth discussions of official norms for religious education and of the differences between age groups is also beyond my scope now, although these are clearly topics of interest in this setting. Still, I have

¹ See, for instance, these recent studies: Kim Helsvig, "Kristendom og dåpsopplæring i norsk skole 1739–2003," *Kirke og Kultur* 5/6 (2003): 447–61; Olav Hovdelien, "Fra kristen trosopplæring til pluralistisk religionsundervisning: den religionspedagogiske utviklingen i norsk skole," *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift* 5/6 (2003): 272–81; Dagrun Skjeltbred, Norunn Askeland, Eva Maagerø, and Bente Aamotsbakken, *Norsk lærebokhistorie: Allmueskolen – folkeskolen – grunnskolen 1739–2013* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2017); Geir Skeie, "Where is Norwegian religious education research heading? A discussion based on two dissertations," *Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education* 1 (2017): 27–48. I am greatly indebted to Harald Torgersen for his expert advice on the material.

endeavoured to base my study on textbooks that are representative and/or important, in the sense that they have been distributed nationally and been published in several editions, some – like Volrath Vogt's *Bibelhistorie [Biblical History]* and Ivar Refsdal's *Skoleatlas [School Atlas]* – dominated the market for decades.²

I begin with a work that is primarily typical, Hans Julius Knudsen's *Bibelsk Geographie [Biblical Geography]*.³ It is not only typical in terms of content; it is an example both of the transnational character of Biblical history and of how it has been produced under specific, local circumstances. Knudsen is a curious historical figure of a kind that was on the wane: the lonely, local scholar whose work gave him a connection to wider academic circles. Later on, textbook production became professionalized, centralized, and decontextualized – except in its adherence to changing national didactic, disciplinary, and political demands.

Biblical Geography Reaches its End

Hans Julius Knudsen was a vicar in Klepp in Rogaland in southwestern Norway from 1849 to 1858. He was known for his work for the poor and for travellers, whom he welcomed to the vicarage. Travellers from large parts of the country came to stay and to receive not only alms and support, but a basic education and confirmation. Many of them married in his church and were thus protected from being arrested on the road and sent to work-houses. This did not endear him with his parishioners, and the conflicts around his work seem to be the reason why he left Klepp after ten years.

During his time in Klepp, Knudsen also found time to publish his *Biblical Geography*, printed in Stavanger in 1858. This was a Norwegian edition of Calwer Verlagsverein's *Biblische Geographie [Biblical Geography]*, a guide for other kinds of travellers than those who had gathered on Knudsen's land – it was written for pilgrims in the widest sense, for readers, dreamers, and even for those who eventually journeyed to the Holy Land.⁴ The book is a late example of Biblical study as the preparation for the actual, physical voyage, interesting not least because it was aimed at “schools and families”; a textbook for children and a general audience. The original had been a great success: Knudsen could base his version on the seventh edition of the German work. The Norwegian reception was rather more modest, and *Bibelsk Geographie* does not appear to have been printed more than this once.

² Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie med lidt af Kirkens Historie* (Kristiania: Steensballes Forlag, 1858); Ivar Refsdal, *Atlas for skole og hjem* (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1902), later revised and printed as *School Atlas*. Both these books were the first in a long series of editions.

³ Hans Julius Knudsen, *Bibelsk Geographie for Skoler og Familier* (Stavanger: W.G. Lønning, 1858).

⁴ Christian Gottlob Barth, ed., *Biblische Geographie für Schulen und Familien. Herausgegeben von dem Calwer Verlagsverein* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1836), and a large number of later editions.

Nevertheless, Knudsen's book is a typical example of the intimate connection between geography, history, and religion in Northern Europe. In volume 2 of the Jerusalem Code trilogy, I have explored the convergence between physical and sacred geography in European cartography, and discussed how maps of the Holy Land reflect the general development towards a cartography concerned with what one might call pure, universal space.⁵ The medieval *mappaemundi* had been centred on Jerusalem, oriented towards the East, and were proportioned to accommodate both physical and temporal space: they showed not only rivers, coastlines, and islands, but depictions of important events *in situ*, placing both biblical and secular history. The reader of the map could then not only use it for imaginary travelling, but for private pilgrimage. The Holy Land would typically be equipped with the desert itinerary followed by Moses and the Israelites, represented by a line to be followed with a finger or the eye. In biblical maps of the Renaissance, this line would often be divided into stations marked with references to the corresponding passage from the text, transforming the maps into sites of re-enactment. The epistemology and ontology of these iconic maps were in other words very different from those of our time: To their readers, they were not simply representations of the Holy Land; they *were* those sacred spaces.

This sacred cartography changed, however. After the reinvention of Ptolemaic geography, maps generally came to be oriented towards the North. As discussed earlier, the maps of the Holy Land were slower to take this turn: throughout the sixteenth century, many of these maps were oriented in other ways, and still seemed to reach for the East. By the eighteenth century, however, even sacred territory had aligned to the universal compass: North was up, regardless of time and space. There was no longer a sacred compass.

This chapter follows the aftermath of this greater development in a specific setting, the Norwegian school since the late nineteenth century. What was the importance of religion in geography – and what was the importance of geography in the textbooks on religion?

Knudsen's edition of the *Biblische Geographie* was one of the last works to attempt the classical integration of the two. It is a broad description of the Middle East, divided into two main parts: "Det forjættede Land" og "Hedningernes Lande", i.e. "The Promised Land" and "The Land of the Heathens." The two parts are different in terms of historicity: both are described as contemporary landscapes, but the Promised Land is also historical; both now and then, worldly and sacred. This double nature is now perhaps less striking than the fact that the world of the heathens is only current and without temporal depth – with a few notable exceptions, first and foremost the desert where the Israelites wandered. Their journey is described in some detail, but otherwise, the lands of other peoples in the region is immediate

⁵ See Chapter 10 (Erling Sandmo), vol. 2, 179–96.

and traversable. The orientalism in this distinction between the merely physical and the physico-spiritual terrains of the region is obvious, and detailed: whereas the entire region would be directed eastwards in the Renaissance when classified as *terra sancta*, the geographical discourse in this work carefully reserves the historical dimension for the land of Israelite experience.

In a brief and curious postscript, included “since we have room for it,” the book presents a few words of advice for the reader who desires the actual, personal, physical journey to this historically asymmetrical territory. It gives estimates for the duration and the costs of travel, provides tips for currencies and clothing – but is silent when it comes to the reason and benefits of the long and costly journey. Maybe it is self-evident; maybe the advice is mundane simply because worldly travel is the only possible object of common advice. The spiritual travel, the pilgrimage, is necessarily an individual, unique act.

The page-long juxtaposition of practicalities is not the end, however. The last item in the book is a triptych of maps of “The Lands of the Bible”: one overview of the region, from Rome in the North-West to the Ararat-Niniveh-Babylonia axis in the East, and one detailed map of Canaan (Fig. 19.1). The final map shows the Israelites’ journey and their land divided between the twelve tribes. The route taken is traced in a thin blue line: it takes an effort to see the path through the Red Sea, but it is there.

Eventually, then, Biblical time permeates the geographical world: The Middle East shows itself to be the lands possessed by the Bible, belonging to the Scripture. The highlighted sites and places are included because of their spiritual significance, silently countering the practical tips of the mundane postscript: the lands without history turn out to be colonized, not so much by the powers of the present as of the power of the Biblical past, emerging from the distinctive geography of the modern world.

The Separation of Times

Maps very similar to these remained part of Biblical history for a long time, but the past and the present ceased to converge in the same manner. Volrath Vogt, a theologian who taught at the Cathedral School in Christiania [Oslo] from 1839 to 1889, wrote one of the most lasting successes in Norwegian publishing history: *Bibelhistorie, med lidt af Kirkens Historie* [Biblical History, With a Little History of the Church]. The first edition was first published in 1858, the same year as Knudsen’s *Biblical Geography*, but it was a brief history and a modest publication, with no maps.⁶ However, Vogt’s book

⁶ Vogt, *Bibelhistorie*. Cf. note 2, above. On Vogt, see also Chapter 17 (Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati), 328–59.

Fig. 19.2: Map of Canaan, in Volrath Vogt, *Bibelsoga med noko av kyrkesoga*, 1900.

reached more than a hundred editions and was the standard textbook for generations of pupils. Later editors and publishers kept Vogt's succinct, almost laconic style, but supplied the text with maps. A 1900 edition, published in *nynorsk*, New Norwegian, included two maps.⁷ The first was a representation of the Eastern Mediterranean, the western margin as far east as Greece, but with the same eastern border as the one used by Knudsen. The other map shows Canaan and is in practice identical to Knudsen's, down to the naming of the area in the east as "the land beyond Jordan." However, Vogt's maps are strictly historical and are not connected in any way to contemporary geography: The Biblical past may be of special importance to contemporary understanding of religion, but this religion is becoming an object of knowledge rather than a mode of experience or even as a series of eternal events to be recreated and experienced. It is of particular value, but it is history, nonetheless.

The largest of Vogt's two maps in this 1900 edition underlines this point (Fig. 19.2). It provides the reader with the location of important historical sites, but it does not to

⁷ Volrath Vogt, *Bibelsoga med noko av kyrkesoga*, trans. Per Riste (Kristiania: B.F. Stensballes bokhandels efflg., 1900).

the same degree as Knudsen's present the Holy Land as a space both past and present, with tribes; it is not colonized or immersed in the past. It is a political map of the area at the time of David and Solomon, and it includes a number of sites and cities of general, not Biblical, importance, such as Athens and Constantinople.

The exception is the inclusion of the Israelites' journey through the desert, marked with traditional emphasis as "the road they wandered" [*Vegen dei vandra*]. An intriguing detail, however, is that the route differs slightly from traditional depictions such as the one used by Knudsen: the crossing of the Red Sea seems to take place further to the North, so close to land that it is not clear if the Israelites are actually crossing the sea or walking around it. Another interesting detail is that the mountain on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula is marked "Sinai or Horeb," apparently suggesting that there is no significant difference of meaning or ontology behind the two names, but that they are rather to be seen as synonyms. This resolution of an important enigma in Biblical geography is a clear historicist move away from the idea of this geography as a manifestation of the words of God.

The maps changed more dramatically than the text in subsequent editions of Vogt's *Biblical History*. These changes may be said to have a general direction, but there is no simple, linear development. In the 1921 edition, for instance, there are four maps: the first a large map of contemporary Jerusalem; the second a smaller, historical map of the city as it developed from the time of Christ to the destruction in 70 C.E.⁸ Although produced by the same lithographical workshop in Kristiania – Qvistgaard & Co, Litographisk Anstalt – the two are designed very differently; the first lavish in its typography and execution, the second clear and simple and stylistically similar to the last two, one small, of Sinai with the journey of the Israelites, and one large map of Palestine – divided between the twelve tribes. The map of present Jerusalem was by this time becoming unusual: its inclusion in the otherwise purely historical account seems to mark a return to the temporal depth of earlier Biblical history. It then becomes particularly intriguing that this very map is visibly older, with its Gothic lettering – it seems to be returning in a setting where it is impressive, but out of time.

The historical maps are modern and clear, typical of their time – and in terms of technology and design very similar to those found in contemporary atlases. Even this, however, would change: In the 1931 edition of Vogt's history, the maps are illustrations to the text, not, as in earlier editions, placed at the end, as appendices.⁹ This was not a new practice: Vilhelm Poulsen's *Bibelhistorie for Folkeskolen* [*Bible History for the People's School*] was first published in 1890, and had then its maps at the end of the book, but in the 1911 edition, the maps were reduced in size

⁸ Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie for middelskolen* (Kristiania: P.F. Steensballe Bokhandels efftg, 1921).

⁹ Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie for folkeskolen* (Oslo: Stenballe, 1931).

and inserted in the text as traditional illustrations.¹⁰ This book included a small map of the Israelites' journey as part of the appropriate passage.¹¹ What was new in the 1931 Vogt edition was the design: the illustrations were now visibly different from the maps that could be found in atlases, they were not geographical in the strict sense (Fig. 19.3). Any detail was gone, the map is now a rough image, highlighting names rather than the terrain. The typography is prominent: despite its small size, the map shows how the journey through the desert connects not only Egypt and Arabia, but Africa and Asia, labelled in large, transparent letters. Canaan stretches towards the Northeast; the name

Fig. 19.3: *The Wandering of the Israelites*, in Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie for folkeskolen*, 1931.

Canaan printed in a manner which directs the reader's gaze away from the region and from Israel's prehistory. As far as I have seen, this map is rare in its emphasis on this global dimension of the Old Testament; the narrative moving away from Africa and even transgressing Asia on its way towards the main stage of Church history.

By 1993, the letters had changed again, this time appearing as written by hand, unevenly, maybe even by a child (Fig. 19.4).¹² In this edition, the lack of geographical realism is even more pertinent. Much of the Sinai Peninsula is taken up by a drawing of the tabernacle, surrounded by the Israelites' tents; a ship is heading towards the Canaan coast, sails bulging in the wind. A few changes are geographically very specific, however: the line marking the journey no longer crosses the Red Sea, but seems to move through one of the small lakes in the Land of Goshen in the North. Most curiously, a thin, dotted line marks an "Ordinary Route of Travel" [*Vanlig reiserute*] following the Mediterranean coast

¹⁰ Vilhelm Poulsen, *Bibelhistorie for Folkeskolen* (Kristiania: P.T. Mallings Boghandels Forlag, 1890). The 1911 edition (Kristiania: Aschehoug) was a major revision of Poulsen's text by theologian and school politician Sven Svensen, an important early proponent of "enhetsskolen," the unified Norwegian school.

¹¹ Poulsen, *Bibelhistorie for Folkeskolen* [1911], 35.

¹² Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie* (Det evangelisk-lutherske kirkesamfunn, 1993), 41.

Fig. 19.4: *The Wandering in the Desert*, illustration by Kathrine Kleveland, in Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie*, 1993.

northwards: the Israelites had a choice, and chose to take the less ordinary path. This dotted line, then, seems to subvert the entire religious dimension of the Exodus.

What we see appears to be, first, a breaking of the old bond between the teaching of Christian religion and geography: Biblical geography is no longer geography in any strict sense, but a textbook aesthetics. The map becomes a stage; the idea of a recreation of the original journey, is no longer supported by precise information. The information of Knudsen's old textbook is replaced by historical imagery, inviting fantasy and re-staging rather than actual pilgrimage. Second, however, details in the process of cartographic revision suggest not only this separation of religion and geography, but a growing hesitancy towards presenting the journey through the desert in general and the crossing of the Red Sea in particular as actual, physical events. The course taken is moved ever northwards, eventually north of the Red Sea altogether, and the 1993 inclusion of an "ordinary" route towards what was once labelled the promised land reduces the 40 years in the desert from miracle and religious ordeal to an act of extraordinary travel.

The textbooks in biblical history close two doors: one towards traditional religious experience, towards the study of biblical history as a deepening of faith; one towards the understanding of the Holy Land as an actual, physical space. What opens up between these two doors is an allegorical space, mapped as an imaginary and imagined terrain. Other textbooks seem to follow the same ontological and epistemological course – exemplified for instance by the map in Elsa Joranger's *Verdens lys* [*The Light of the World*], which has given up any attempt to outline the journey through the desert and settles for a simplistic drawing of a small group of travellers in the desert with their backs to the viewer, themselves gazing towards two future images of Joseph and Mary, on their way to Bethlehem and on their way to Egypt.¹³ This map seems to hark back to medieval maps, where space becomes a meeting-ground for different times. Other books combine this primarily illustrative cartography with a certain game-like design, such as Anna Amundsen's *Jeg så ham som barn* [*I Saw Him as a Child*] (1954), where one of the two maps of Palestine (Fig. 19.5)¹⁴ bears a strong likeness to one of the most popular board games in the Nordic countries, *The Lost Diamond*, which is laden with imperialist exoticism (Fig. 19.6).¹⁵ It might be argued that this simplistic representation of Palestine is a form of exoticization, but this is not mirrored in the material I have studied here. It should rather be read as a domestication, as a step towards a stylization which turns Biblical geography into a ever-present non-space – like a board game.

Geography Secularized

If we turn momentarily to the textbooks in geography, we find the same movement – in this case, then, a movement away from the Biblical. Those who read Knudsen's *Biblical Geography* may also have been familiar with Georg Prahls *Alminneligt Norsk Skole-Atlas* [*Common Norwegian School Atlas*] (1836).¹⁶ This atlas, in a way which would become traditional, began with a presentation of the planetary system, the sky, and the globe, before zooming in on Europe and then Norway and its partner in the political union, Sweden. After presenting more large-scale overviews of the other parts of Europe, Prahls zoomed out and showed the continents on single-page maps. At the very last full page, he presented a map of Palestine, the most detailed in the book. It blends times, providing both contemporary names and Biblical legend – and, in the lower right-hand corner, a small, but detailed map of Jerusalem at

¹³ Elsa Joranger, *Verdens lys*, 3rd ed. (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1974), 26.

¹⁴ Anna Amundsen, *Jeg så ham som barn – Bibelhistorie for folkeskolen* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1954), 148.

¹⁵ The game was first produced in Finland in 1951 as *Afrikan tähti* [*The Star of Africa*] by game designer Kari Mannerla and sold in very large numbers both in Finland and the Scandinavian countries.

¹⁶ Georg Prahls, *Alminneligt Norsk Skole-Atlas* (Bergen: Prahls, 1836).

Fig. 19.5: *Map of Palestine*, illustration by Lars Wangensteen Berge, in Anna Amundsen, *Jeg så ham som barn – Bibelhistorie for folkeskolen*, 1954.

the time of Christ. In other words, the atlas approaches the world from outside and moves through the regions that might be expected to be familiar to its Norwegian audience, and ends at what could well be interpreted as the world's core – the world still understood, then, as a conjunction of time and space.¹⁷ In 1880, in *Kortbog eller nyt*

¹⁷ See Helge Jordheim and Erling Sandmo, "Introduction: The World as Concept and Object of Knowledge," in *Conceptualizing the World: An Exploration Across Disciplines*, eds. Helge Jordheim and Erling Sandmo (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

Fig. 19.6: *Den forsvunne diamant* (detail), Norwegian edition of the Finnish board game *Afrikan tähti*. By courtesy of Egmont Kids Media, Norway. All rights reserved to the rights holders of Kari Mannerla.

geografisk Atlas til Brug for Skolen og Hjemmet [Map Book or New Geographical Atlas for Use in School and at Home], the temporal hybridity is still there, but the detailed Jerusalem map is replaced by a general outline of the city's surroundings.¹⁸ The disappearance of Biblical time and geography from the school atlases seems to set in from around this time, at the end of the nineteenth century: in 1884, C. Schollert's *Norsk Skoleatlas* [Norwegian School Atlas] shows the region which was formerly the Holy Land only as an unnamed part of the Ottoman Empire, with physical features and place names, but devoid of any history.¹⁹

Throughout the main part of the following century, Ivar Refsdal's *School Atlas* dominated Norwegian the teaching of geography. Its 20 editions between 1902 and 1964 reflect a growing expertise in the depiction of the physical and natural aspects of

¹⁸ N.C. Rom and Colonel J.H. Mansa, *Kortbog eller nyt geografisk Atlas for Skolen og Hjemmet* (Copenhagen: N.C. Roms Forlagsforretning, 1880).

¹⁹ C. Schollert, *Norsk skoleatlas* (Kristiania: Det private Opmaalingskontor, 1884).

geography, but the maps of Palestine and eventually Israel play no important role. On the contrary: Seen in the light of the history of the mapping of the regions of Biblical history, Refsdal embodies an almost demonstrative break. Already the first edition divides the region in two, separating what was once its southwestern part – Eastern Egypt, the Red Sea, and Sinai – from the Northeast. The Southwest is depicted, enlarged, on what appears to be part of a collage of political maps of Asia; the Northwest is not given any particular attention and appears only on a large-scale map of Asia Minor, as part of Ottoman Syria.²⁰ In later editions, Refsdal kept this division, despite the insistence on unity in contemporary textbooks in religion and Biblical history, but there were some slight changes in the placings of the special mappings of these divided parts of the Middle East. In the fourth edition (1916) they were both inserted on a page featuring Africa; in the last edition (1964), an intriguing revision opens for more information – and a striking non-visualization (Fig. 19.7). The Middle East is now on a double page collage of African physical and political geography. The main physical map shows the globe seen from a vantage point high above Central Africa, with a rapidly diminishing North stretching so far as to include even Scandinavia. A smaller map is cropped so that the southern tip of Israel, stretching down to the Red Sea, appears to be hidden under the North Sea.²¹

There is perhaps an ambiguity to this obliteration of the southern part of the quite new Israeli state. It can be seen both as a denial and as an oblique reconnection of the Holy Land to Norway: for the informed reader, it would be clear that the hidden tip of Israel would just reach the Norwegian west coast – maybe even touching Sogn, the district in Western Norway where Refsdal himself had been born, but this is purely speculative: the main point here is that the school subjects of Biblical history and geography were moving away from each other, like epistemological continents adrift.

New Remnants of an Old Tradition

Works on Biblical geography were of course still published for a general audience, but even they display a historically new uncertainty, a distance, when discussing the formerly fundamental issue of the continuity between the religious then and now. This continuity had been the premise of the very idea of this particular geography, with the land of the Bible as the territory of the still present, living past – as Biblical geography in the literal sense. *Dreyers Bibelatlas* [*Dreyer's Biblical Atlas*] (1961), for instance, presents a brief retelling of the Bible and the history of the

²⁰ Refsdal, *Atlas for skole og hjem*, 1902.

²¹ Ivar Refsdal, *Skole-Atlas*, 20th ed., 2nd printing (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1968), 26–7.

Fig. 19.7: Map from Aschehoug's *School Atlas*, by Ivar Refsdal, 1964.

early church up until the time of Constantine the Great. In the very last paragraph of the text, the reader learns that

When Emperor Constantine came to power in year 313 C.E., Christianity's time of troubles was definitely over. Although the Emperor himself did not let himself be baptized on his death-bed, he privileged Christianity and made it the religion of the State. Thus began that era of the relationship between Church and State, between Christianity and culture, in which we still live, in a way.²²

The hesitancy in the somewhat awkward “in a way” [*på en måte*] exposes the vast difference between the late mysticism of Knudsen's *Biblical Geography* and this post-war book: The ultimate conjunction of past and present has been replaced by two entirely different ways of knowing, understanding, and even mapping the Middle East.

Remnants of the older mode of thinking lingered on: change in this field was slow and gradual, and in practice also uneven because individual textbooks and other didactical tools were in use for a long time. One such tool was a large, undated map of the Holy Land that was used in a large number of Norwegian classrooms throughout much of the twentieth century (Fig. 19.8).²³ It showed the Holy Land with a smaller map of the inner Oslo Fjord in the top left-hand corner. The point was that the Holy Land was the same size as this part of Norway; Jerusalem thus corresponding silently with the Norwegian capital. Similarly, Arne Fjellbu's *Hvorledes Kristendommen ble til* [*How Christianity Was Made*] (1939) introduced its first chapter, on “The Religion of Israel,” with a map of Southern Norway accompanied by a small map of Palestine in the same scale.²⁴ The book is a hybrid in the geographical sense: it also presents a map of Biblical Palestine in the emerging simplistic style, with a stylized map equipped with miniature drawings. The juxtaposition of the maps of Norway and Palestine are interesting, however, because of their implied insistence of a particular connection between the two lands and, consequently, the two histories: knowing one opened for a deeper understanding of the other.

Modern Times, Ancient Ideas

Despite the marked and systematic changes in the relationship between geography and Biblical history between the late nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century, signs of older ways of thinking emerge once we look for them. On the surface, the classroom map's juxtaposition of the permanently Biblical Holy Land

²² Peter Wilhelm Bøckman, *Dreyers Bibelatlas* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1961), 62. My translation.

²³ *Aschehougs kart over Palestina på Kristi tid* (Oslo: Aschehoug, n.d.).

²⁴ Arne Fjellbu, *Hvorledes Kristendommen ble til* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1939).

Fig. 19.8: *Aschehoug's Map of Palestine in the Age of Christ*, classroom map, mid-twentieth century. Constructed and drawn by B. Luncke and Scott-Ruud. Courtesy of Aschehoug & Co., Oslo. Photo: Are Flågan, National Library of Norway, Oslo.

Fig. 19.9: *With Moses from Egypt to Israel*, illustration by Kjersti Scheen, in *Jeg kan: Kristendomskunnskap for grunnskolen 2. Arbeidsbok*, by Bjørn Gjefsen, Randi Dyrerud, and Helene Dæhlin, 1993.

and contemporary Norway is a strict and unimaginative piece of modern cartography, but, at the same time, it is an almost secretive suggestion of an inner connection between the two lands and two times. Not only did the map depict and manifest such connections – it may be said to have brought a pre- or at least early modern experience of sacred cartography to the classrooms of social democratic and highly secularized Norway.

One could even argue, modestly, that even if the historical process I have outlined here is fairly clear, its direction is not. The subject of geography is clearly moving away from religion towards a strictly secular knowledge of the physical and to some degree political dimensions of the world. At a general level, it reflects the earlier development of an atemporal, purely spatial geography. The history of visual Biblical geography may be less linear, and that is striking in the case of the emergence of the very distinct, naïve illustrations which seem to be only reminiscent of maps. Their appearance may be new, but their function, on the contrary, may be very old and perhaps even represent something of a return to a distant past.

A clue to this function may be found in Augusta Schjelderup and Julie Andresen's important *Kristendomsundervisningen i Folkeskolen* [*The Teaching of Christendom in the People's School*], published in three editions between 1953 and 1963.²⁵ This was a

²⁵ Augusta Schjelderup and Julie Andresen, *Kristendomsundervisningen i Folkeskolen*, 1st ed. (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1953).

Fig. 19.10: *Socrates and the Brain Labyrinth*, illustration by Hilde Hodnefjeld, in *Under Treet: Kristendomsundervisning med religions- og livssynsorientering for 2. klasse: Arbeidsbok*, by Bjørn Gjefsen, Helene Dæhlin, and Elen Egeland, 1997.

Fig. 19.11: *Josef and Mary on their Way to Bethlehem*, illustration by Hilde Hodnefjeld, in *Under Treet: Kristendomsundervisning med religions- og livssynsorientering for 2. klasse: Arbeidsbok*, by Bjørn Gjefsen, Helene Dæhlin, and Elen Egeland, 1997.

teachers' manual which followed the common, official teaching plan – *normalplanen* – and supplied it with practical tips and hints for teachers; particularly those who were new in the job. In the chapter on the fourth grade, Schjelderup and Andresen state that “Children are very fond of map work” and “may draw the journey from Egypt to Canaan on a stencilled map which will fit into their workbook.”²⁶

The ambition here is one of participation, of creating identification with the Israelites and even the re-enactment of their arduous travel. While dotted lines tracing the journey abound in nineteenth-century Biblical geographies, the itineraries adhere to the modernity of the cartography. They are straight-forward and direct; far removed from the twisting and curling patterns of Medieval *mappaemundi*. Those older lines, however, were designed for meditation; for the spending of time and effort and as guidelines for readings of the Bible itself. In Norway in 1953, teachers are recommended to let their pupils create and use maps in just this way, as means of reliving and for traversing Biblical geography themselves. The journey through the desert is the first cartographic task, given to children in

²⁶ “Da barn er veldig glad i kartarbeid, kan de få tegne vandringen fra Egypt til Kana'an på et mangfoldiggjort kart som passer til arbeidsboka.” Schjelderup and Andresen, *Kristendomsundervisningen i Folkeskolen*, 101. Less detailed, but more concise, is the later official *Teaching Plan for the Undertaking of the Nine-Year School* (1966), which states simply that “Maps are absolutely necessary.” Forsøksrådet for skoleverket, *Læreplan for forsøk med niårig skole* (Oslo: Forsøksrådet for skoleverket/H. Aschehoug & co., 1966), 134.

the fourth grade; those in the fifth should be able to draw a map of Palestine free-hand; and, finally, in the sixth grade, pupils were to “draw a large map and mark Paul’s travels – including the journey to Rome. Only the cities Paul visited should be on the map.”²⁷

Participation has its own histories. Recent textbooks provide interesting examples of how the forms of participation change. In some cases, this meant the introduction of new elements, as in Bjørn Gjefsen, Randi Dyrerud, and Helene Dæhlin’s *Jeg kan [I Can]* (1993); one of the last childrens’ textbooks to be written for the subject of Christendom.²⁸ At this time, parents could apply for their children to be exempt from the subject and to study what was generally classified as *livssyn* – “views of life.” Christendom in general and Biblical history in particular was under acute pressure, and the need to appear open and accommodating is obvious in some of the pupils’ tasks.

This is a task which stands in the grand tradition: trace the Israelites’ journey through the desert (Fig. 19.9). Ironically, this is done by throwing dice: the crossing of the Red Sea appears to depend on the people landing on square 27, “The army of Pharaoh threatens you, but you escape.” On the other hand, it is vital to avoid square 49, “The Israelites break their pact with God and must wander in the desert for 40 years.”²⁹

The controversies surrounding Christendom in schools led to the introduction of a new subject, “Knowledge of Christendom with Religion and Orientation in Views of Life,” in 1997.³⁰ The same year, Gjefsen and Dæhlin wrote the necessary textbook, *Under treet [Under the Tree]* (1997), together with Elen Egeland.³¹ Like *I Can*, the text volume is supplied with a workbook with practical little tasks. Two of these are both interesting and fascinatingly similar: the first is from a section on “views of life,” the second from one on Christendom (Figs. 19.10, 19.11). The first task is to assist Socrates in his search for a goal, the second to help Joseph and Mary find their way to Bethlehem.³² Both tasks consist in moving through a labyrinth. Not only are the two labyrinths almost identical in their outline; the twisted lines of the solution resemble the medieval images of the Israelites’ journey through the desert. Even more

27 “Tegn et stort kart og merk opp Paulus’ reiser – også reisen til Rom. Bare de byene som Paulus besøkte, tas med.” Schjelderup and Andresen, *Kristendomsundervisningen i Folkeskolen*, 187.

28 Bjørn Gjefsen, Randi Dyrerud, and Helene Dæhlin, *Jeg kan: Kristendomskunnskap for grunnskolen 2. Arbeidsbok* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1993).

29 Gjefsen, Dyrerud, and Dæhlin, *Jeg kan: Kristendomskunnskap for grunnskolen 2. Arbeidsbok*, 6–7.

30 The Norwegian name for the subject was “Kristendomskunnskap med religion og livssynsorientering.”

31 Bjørn Gjefsen, Helene Dæhlin, and Elen Egeland, *Under treet: Kristendomskunnskap med religion og livssynsorientering for 2. klasse. Arbeidsbok* (Oslo: Gyldendal undervisning, 1997).

32 The teacher’s guide leaves the question of what the goal is to the teacher and to the plenary discussion in the classroom. Gjefsen, Dæhlin, and Egeland, *Under treet: Kristendomskunnskap med religion og livssynsorientering for 2. klasse. Lærerveiledning* (Oslo: Gyldendal undervisning, 1997), 12.

obvious is the connection between the labyrinth and the brain. Visualizing Socrates' thought process as a movement through the brain may not be particularly original, but the similarity between the two labyrinths also seems to imply that the Joseph's and Mary's journey, too, is mental or intellectual, a process which takes place in the mind of the pupil: the map becomes a stage for religious meditation. The mock-map can be seen as a return to a lost cartographic description.

This is an almost profound moment, a sudden unravelling of an ancient tradition in the middle of a textbook written especially for a new subject; "Knowledge of Christendom with Religion and Orientation in Views of Life." In 2007, this subject was found to be in conflict with § 18 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."³³ The subject was replaced by "Religion, Views of life, and Ethics," but another political turn produced the current "Christendom, Religion, Views of Life, and Ethics" in 2015.³⁴ There was, in other words, a heated debate over whether or not Biblical history should be part of Norwegian childrens' education. While these debates raged, the children themselves quietly traced the ancient journeys – in ways that were almost as old as Christianity itself.

³³ Quoted from: United Nations, "United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18", accessed May 3, 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

³⁴ The Norwegian terms are "Religion, livssyn og etikk" and "Kristendom, religion, livssyn og etikk."