One year early in the sixteenth century, Dirk Paesschen – an Antwerp ‘tour-operator’ before such a term was known – had a ship built in order to provide a regular passenger service to the Holy Land. The ship appears in a woodcut dated 1515, measuring two meters and twenty centimeters long by thirty centimeters high. It depicts the Schelde river at Antwerp, where the ship lay at anchor with the crusaders’ cross on its pennant and the inscription ‘Dits tschip dat vâ Italia comt’ [This is the ship that comes from Italy] on the port side. It made its first voyage in 1511, and with such success that Paesschen soon met with a competitor, Willem van der Gheest, who launched a ship ‘Sint Christoffel’ to transport another group of pilgrims to the Promised Land. These business ventures did not last long, because in 1517 Jerusalem was definitively conquered by the Turks, whose distinctly unfriendly reactions markedly cooled the enthusiasm for such pilgrimages – as did the shipwrecks still common at that time. Most of the pilgrimages to the Holy Land went via Venice, which probably explains the inscription on the ship. Some pilgrims also travelled by land along the Rhine and across the Gotthard or Brenner passes to Venice, where they boarded ship. A remarkably large number of atlases intended for travel were published at Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century, depicting the cities and ports of the eastern Mediterranean, often including the Holy Land as the final destination (illus. 1).

These ventures are a telling symptom of the West-European Christian world’s attachment to the pilgrimages to the land where Christ lived and died. It must have been quite a shock to the deeply religious Christians when the Holy Land of their Saviour was lost first through the definitive failure of the crusades after the fall of Akko in 1291, and later through the conquest by the Turks in 1517. For centuries Jerusalem and the Holy Land had stood not only in the centre of their religious devotion, but also in the centre of their world maps. In the so-called T-O maps of the middle ages, based not on reality but on religious
VIAGGIO
DA VENETIA,
A COSTANTINOPOLI
Per Marre, e per Terra, et insieme quello di Terra Santa.
CIOE
Citta, Castelli, Porti, Golgi, Isola, Monti, Fiumi, e Mari.
Opera utile, a Mercanti, Marinari, et a studiosi di Geografia.
in Venetia Apresso Stefano Scolari, a Sal. Marci Sadelar.

IN VENETIA
Con Privilegio.