



# Maps of Paradise

By Alessandro Scafi

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## Maps of Paradise By Alessandro Scafi

Where is paradise? It always seems to be *elsewhere*, inaccessible, outside of time. Either it existed yesterday or it will return tomorrow; it may be just around the corner, on a remote island, beyond the sea. Across a wide range of cultures, paradise is located in the distant past, in a longed-for future, in remote places or within each of us. In particular, people everywhere in the world share some kind of nostalgia for an innocence experienced at the beginning of history. For two millennia, learned Christians have wondered where on earth the primal paradise could have been located. Where was the idyllic Garden of Eden that is described in the Bible? In the Far East? In equatorial Africa? In Mesopotamia? Under the sea? Where were Adam and Eve created in their unspoiled perfection?

*Maps of Paradise* charts the diverse ways in which scholars and mapmakers from the eighth to the twenty-first century rose to the challenge of identifying the location of paradise on a map, despite the certain knowledge that it was beyond human reach. Over one hundred illustrations celebrate this history of a paradox: the mapping of the unmappable. It is also a mirror to the universal dream of perfection and happiness, and the yearning to discover heaven on earth.

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