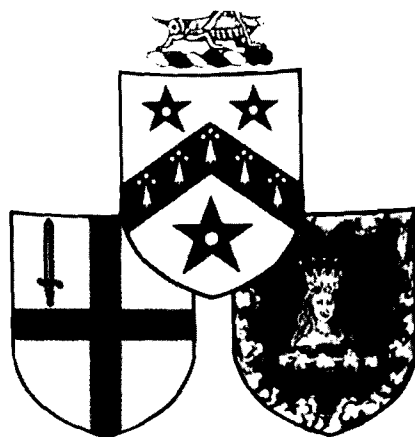


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*C O L L E G E*



**THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN JERUSALEM**

by

**The Revd. Professor R.J.C. Chartres MA BD**  
**Gresham Professor of Divinity**

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## GRESHAM COLLEGE

### THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN JERUSALEM

#### 1. Imperial Archaeology

The Reverend Professor R.J.C. Chartres, M.A., B.D.  
Gresham Professor of Divinity

Lecture given in the Church of St Mary-le-Bow, London EC2  
on 6th December 1989

Jerusalem has been the spiritual symbol for people all over the world and has been in our culture for many centuries. You will remember Henry IV - "It hath been prophesied to me many years, that I should not die but in Jerusalem which vainly I supposed the Holy Land. But bear me to that chamber there I'll lie, in that Jerusalem shall Harry die". Of course, that Jerusalem is the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey. Every culture makes Jerusalem for itself in its own home. But the fact that it does so of course flows from the immense hold on the imagination that Jerusalem, the capital of the Holy Land, has had now for almost 3,000 years.

I want to give you the background to some very recent work that has been done this year under the auspices of Gresham College, work that involves very interesting cooperation and collaboration between various disciplines - an historian, an archaeologist and the Reader in Surveying in the Department of Civil Engineering in the City University. This cooperation has been between people who have studied the documents and have also experience in the techniques of archaeology, but also they have been immensely assisted by a photogrammetric survey of the central structure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem which as you probably know is called the Edicule. This structure actually surrounds the area where it has always been believed the cave, the tomb where Jesus Christ was laid after his crucifixion, the tomb of the resurrection, the empty tomb. The edicule is the architectural structure enclosing that spot. This year some very exciting work has been done by a multi-disciplinary team, and a photogrammetric survey has been prepared. So this week and next week, I am simply giving a general introduction to some of the results of the Gresham Project which I hope will emerge by the end of this year and the beginning of next.

I would like to draw your attention to what promises to be a very fascinating and important lecture by the scientific member of the Gresham team - Mr. Cooper (Reader in Surveying at the Department of Civil Engineering in the City University) on the 13th December 1989. He will be talking about the methods he used in this very fascinating process of surveying by photogrammetry, which provides 3-D impressions of structures. It's a quite recently developed technique which promises some very exciting results.

It is hoped that the archaeologist who has been chiefly involved with this work on the central structure of the Holy Sepulchre, Professor Martin Biddle, will be able in the New Year to present his findings in a rather more final way than has been possible so far. But he has produced an initial report on the work done this year and this can be obtained from Gresham College.

I want to give you some sort of background as to why we were particularly fascinated by this work and the opportunities it presented; why we thought it was particularly important to do and what the problems are to which Professor Biddle and Mr. Cooper were addressing themselves.

Jerusalem is of course a holy city for three religions. It has obviously been a holy city for the Jews since the time of 1000 BC when King David conquered the city from the Jebusites - this is one of those few 'life-saver' dates in ancient history which one can cling onto to make sense of all the rest of it. King David introduced the Ark into the City and really began the career of Jerusalem as a great spiritual symbol and centre. It is not only sacred to the Jews, it is also sacred to Christians - this was the City where the climacteric events of the earthly life of Jesus Christ took place. Jerusalem is also a City which is sacred to the Muslims, because the Muslims continue the ancient tradition that a prophet has to be recognized and validated in Jerusalem. The Muslim connection with Jerusalem really flows from an early interpretation of the 17th chapter of the Holy Koran which describes the night journey of the prophet Mohammed. He journeys from Mecca mounted on his mythic steed and is conveyed to the Holy City, to what is described as the 'Further Mosque'. In Arabic the 'Further Mosque' is Al-Aqsa, and the most important structure on the present Temple Mount in Jerusalem is of course the Al-Aqsa Mosque and this recalls this story. Having arrived on his mythic steed at the Further Mosque, then a ladder was set up upon a rock and Mohammed mounted for his mystical vision of God and for his validation, for his confirmation, as a prophet of God. So it is a Holy City to Jews, to Christians and also to Muslims, and that as you will be aware poses some of its most considerable strains, tensions and difficulties today.

If you want to get a connected idea of the stage on which the Holy Sepulchre was placed and you want some sort of connected notion of the great pageant of the spiritual history of Jerusalem perhaps then we ought to meditate on that rock. Many of you will have stood on the Mount of Olives and looked across the Valley of the Kidron (the shady valley - that's what it means) and you will have seen the great fortifications largely dating from Otterman times in the 16th century. On the top of those fortifications, over the battlements you will see the great symbol of modern day Jerusalem, the dome, now aluminium, gilded, which covers the rock - the Dome of the Rock. At the other end of this area is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Dome of the Rock which is the modern symbol of Jerusalem, covers this rock which is absolutely at the centre of the story of the Holy City and gives you perhaps some sort of framework, some thread on which to hang your own impressions and your own thoughts.

Let me tell you just a little more about that rock. The rock is believed in Jewish legend to be the navel of the world. From beneath the rock the four waters of paradise are thought to spring. It is the rock traditionally on Mount Moriah where the prophet Abraham was tempted to sacrifice his son Isaac. It was that very rock where Isaac was so nearly sacrificed if the ram hadn't appeared in time. It probably was the rock of sacrifice outside the door of Solomon's Temple and therefore the stone of sacrifice which was outside the second temple built after Solomon's Temple was destroyed in the 6th century BC. That was the rock from which it was believed the prophet Mohammed ascended to Heaven. It was a rock used by

those monkish militants, the Templar Knights, as the altar for their church - that rock was covered in marble and carved, you can still see the marks of the Templars, and now stripped, that rock remains under the dome. Its history is still not finished because in Muslim belief particularly, the rock is believed to have a very significant part to play in the history of the end of the world because the last judgement will take place in the vicinity and the rock will be the throne of God. So that one rock can provide some sort of thread, some sort of theme and it can help us to be more aware of the extraordinary richness and complexity of the spiritual history of this extraordinary city.

Jerusalem as you know occupies a very significant and strategic point on the north/south communications of the Holy Land. There is a central ridge of high country and for those who needed to travel in a north/south direction, to have Jerusalem in your possession was a very important matter. It is a superb defensive site. It's not so easy to see that nowadays because some parts of it are buried in as much as 60 feet of rubbish and rubble, but it is a superb defensive site with ravines protecting the higher places. It is about 37 miles away from the sea. It is therefore a city in a land which has been exposed to many incursions, many cultural currents, many influences. The whole of the Holy Land was the plaything of the great empires at either end of the fertile crescent in ancient times. It was either under the control of those who had their capital by the Euphrates or under the control of the Egyptians from the Nile delta. And so it was a place exposed to many different cultural influences. But in the hill country you could still have a community life and a history despite the march of the armies up and down the coastal strip. In the hill country groups of people could survive century after century defending their own local cultures. Jerusalem has played a vital part in that process in a land which is constantly exposed to many influences, but nevertheless there is a considerable amount of stability in that hill country. On one side the sea from which there were regular incursions throughout history and on the other side the desert.

The desert has played an important part in the life of Jerusalem and in the whole culture of the Holy Land. I don't know whether many people here have had experience of the desert. I was fortunate enough to live for a month in an ancient monastery in Egypt, in the western desert. It was a place of quite extraordinary suggestiveness. The sun was so high during the day, so hot, we used to go walking at night under the moon. I remember an Egyptian Christian leader carrying his great ivory wand into the desert on one of these moonlit walks and sitting down tracing great patterns in the sand as he sought to explain some abstruse point about the personality and the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was an extraordinary place in which there was so little, things were so bare, that a great deal came up from within. It was a place where you heard, you could listen, you had a sensitivity given to you just by the circumstances of the place which hardly fails to be spiritually very significant indeed.

The history of the Holy Land is constantly marked by incursions from the desert, incursions of puritanical, zealous characters coming in fresh from the desert where there is no real shade and coming in with their powerful convictions. And of course it was in that desert that Moses encountered the strange God who has no proper name - Yaweh (I am the God who exists). It isn't a proper name so you

can't really get any power over that God. The God who insisted always (and this is very important for our story of the Holy Sepulchre) that he must never be portrayed, never depicted, never have an image. One of the most extraordinary things about the Temple of Jerusalem was that it was one of the very few temples in the ancient world which contained no image, no cult statue. Most of the other temples of the ancient world were houses for Gods and their images and their cult statues - but not for Yaweh, not for the God with no proper name who was to have no image.

Now this is incredibly important as we try to understand the background of devotion to a tomb that is empty, because after all there are many cultures who are centred on tombs like the pyramids or Lenin's Mausoleum in the centre of Moscow where the whole purpose of the tomb is that they should be full, they preserve an image, an identity. But here in this Holy City dominated by its temple with no cult statue, no image, we have the symbol of a tomb that is empty.

Let's just reflect on that a little more. Very much of our religious life consists in taking our best thoughts and our best aspirations and projecting them, as it were, into the middle distance - an image of our most holy and our most noble thoughts. They are launched, as it were, as a satellite somewhere into the middle distance and very often what people call prayer is a process of internal conversation with that satellite conected by their own best thoughts and aspirations which has been launched into the middle distance. Prayer becomes an internal operation as you address the image that you have projected, and you have some sort of conversation with it.

The Nomads who wandered the desert undoubtedly composed the ancient Israelites. The oldest creed in the Old Testament which appears in the Book of Deuteronomy begins with the words 'A wandering Aramaen was my father'. That's where they came from - wandering desert Nomads. Now when you are wandering in the bareness and the barrenness of the desert, when you are enduring shocks and blows, the exile from Jerusalem, the destruction of your national life, the hostility and the oppression of enemies, then it is that these conected deities composed of our own best thoughts and aspirations are revealed as artificial and not able to help. They fall to pieces at moments like that. The only God that exists, and there is only one God that exists, is the God whom we cannot define, the God we cannot have in our pockets, the God who we cannot touch because our arms are too short, the God we cannot fully understand because our minds are created by Him and too small. He is the God who can touch us and can visit us at times when we have the humility to keep our mouths shut and to stop conected our own deities. Do you see the crucial importance of a religious tradition that despite all temptations to conform to what the Canaanites had by way of religious practices, a religious tradition that was determined to stand by a God who had no proper name, no image and no cult statue, and worship in a temple whose holy of holies was laterly empty. Now that is an absolutely crucial part of the Jerusalem background to the significance of the empty tomb - the Holy Sepulchre. The extraordinary power of this emptiness which we are told in the most ample records we have for this development, in the Old Testament, was a desert discovery.

Now while those early Israelites were still wandering around in their desert, Jerusalem was already an old city. Jerusalem was already an ancient city before it was conquered by King David in 1000 BC. When he arrived he found the small city occupied by a people called the Jebusites. We have actually got a letter from the 14th century BC ruler of that city of Jerusalem which records some of the diplomatic interchange with a Pharaoh at that time. Very interestingly, the King writes in some distress to Pharaoh. Jerusalem was at that point in the Egyptian sphere of influence. The King reports that the land was full of Nomads, it was getting very dangerous and unless the Pharaoh did something, he could probably bid farewell to Egyptian influence in that area. So we know a little bit about Jerusalem's history before the arrival of King David.

David, as I say, arrived in 1000 BC. The capture of Jerusalem was just what he needed to secure the communications between the northern and southern tribes of Israel. Also it gave him a capital which was outside any of the traditional tribal areas, and therefore a capital of greater independence and a capital that wouldn't excite the sort of jealousies if he chose a settlement that was too much associated with one of the old tribes. We hear in the Book of Chronicles that David took the Castle of Zion - Zion simply means citadel - and he dwelt in the Castle and therefore they called it the City of David.

One of the difficulties about unravelling the archaeological history of the Holy City and particularly of the Holy Sepulchre is that Jerusalem has changed its shape a lot in the last 3000 years. The City of David which he conquered in 1000 BC, largely lies outside the city walls of what we now call the old city. The City of David extends in a sort of rather rudely pointing out tongue from the south side of what is now called the Old City of Jerusalem and a little portion of the Jebusite wall has been discovered that was there when David conquered the City. It was only really in the time of David's son Solomon that the area which we now call the Old City of Jerusalem began in part to be occupied. It's easy to see why David's City was where it was because of course the best supply of fresh spring water was there. Under Solomon, the City was extended northwards onto some more high ground and it was there that King Solomon in the middle of the 10th century BC built the first Temple of Jerusalem, on what is still called the Temple Mount. It is the site marked now by the Dome of the Rock and you will remember that we believe that the rock itself was probably the stone of animal sacrifice which stood outside the Temple of King Solomon.

You realize of course that ancient people tended to worship outside their sacred building - that was where the people gathered, in the courtyards round the exterior, round the open air altars. You didn't have large congregations in temples. That fascinatingly enough was the great change that came in with Christianity, because in Christianity the holiness was not in the cult statue or in a particular location - it was in the people. So in the Christian temple the people went inside and it was the people who worshipped inside the temple. But in the ancient world where holiness was in some geographical location or some cult statue removed from the people, the people worshipped outside around the stone of sacrifice. We know very little about the Temple of King Solomon beyond what is described in the Old Testament and I'll leave you to look up the details that we have. That particular Temple was destroyed in the

great disaster which overwhelmed the Kingdom of Judah when in 587 the City of Jerusalem was captured and sacked and the upper classes were deported. It was at that point that the Temple of King Solomon was destroyed and it was not until the end of that century that some of the exiles returned and a second more modest temple was built and finally dedicated in 515 BC.

The exile was of course the time of the great reawakening spiritually, the great reworking of spiritual traditions. It was another kind of political desert experience. The culture of the Jews continued to take great leaps forward, particularly at times when they were under pressure and oppressed. Notably of course the next great crisis in the history of Jerusalem was in the 2nd century BC when the City came under very great pressure from the missionary minded Hellenistic Greek speaking King of Syria, and that Temple which stood for the God who had no proper name and certainly no cult statue was defiled by the erection of a statue of the God Zeus, the King of the Olympians. The desecration of the Temple in this way led to a Jewish revolt which one can read about in the Book of Maccabees in the apocryphal section of the Bible. That revolt was caused by the attempt of the Greek Kings of Syria to bend Jewish culture into a more Hellenistic form. The national rebellion brought about a limited independence and Jerusalem was once again a place where a native dynasty of priest kings ruled. But it took a foreigner, a non-Jew, Herod the Great, to beautify and enhance that Temple even more. Herod the Great was not a Jew, his mother was a Nabatean. He spent some of the formative years of his life in Petra and he came from Idumea which was an area south of Jerusalem where the Edomites had fled. But in order to try and commend himself to his Jewish subjects he began to beautify and enlarge the Temple and you can still see some of his work in Jerusalem today.

The so-called Wailing Wall is unmistakably Herodian. There are great blocks of stone there with smooth edges left rather rougher in the centre to permit them to be properly aligned and to break up the monotony of the surface. You can see those huge Herodian blocks on the retaining walls which he built all around the Temple Mount. That restoration of the Temple was going on while Jesus Christ was alive. The restoration of the Temple began in 20 BC and was not finished until about 64 AD, only six years before the Temple was destroyed for the last time and sacrifices, until this day, ceased. The Temple was destroyed when the Romans attacked and seized the City after yet another Jewish rebellion.

Now it is important to understand when we come to the archaeology of the Holy Sepulchre and of the Jerusalem of Jesus's time, that in 70 AD there was a very great deal of destruction of old Jerusalem including the great Temple so recently beautified by King Herod. But the destruction of 70 AD which is famous and celebrated was as nothing compared with the destruction of Jerusalem which followed the second Jewish rising in the 2nd century, and which was wrought by the Emperor Hadrian. That was a most thorough piece of work. The Emperor Hadrian forbade any Jews, after he had recaptured the City in the 130s AD, to live in it and by 135 he had actually begun to build a new splendid Roman city on the rubble of the demolished ancient Jerusalem and he had actually changed the name of the city to Aelia Capitolina. So you must realize that it is extremely difficult to return to the road pattern, the locations and to the levels which actually saw Jesus walking around and saw the events of

his life and ministry because of the massive destruction and damage in the City after the suppression of the second Jewish rising in the 2nd century and Hadrian's victory.

Now that makes for very great difficulties in our subject. Jews were driven from the City and Christians as well. It was only in the 4th century AD with the arrival of the first Christian Emperor, the Emperor Constantine the Great, that it became possible for Christians to have a more public life, to build great public buildings, to sanctify their holy places with architecture and appropriate conditions. One of the first things that happened in Jerusalem, in the reign of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, was that the Bishop of the church in Jerusalem, Bishop Macarius, went to the Council of Nicaea and asked the Emperor for permission to do some archaeology - in a very surprising place indeed. Now if there is one thing that we all know about burial places in the ancient world it is that they were outside the city walls. We all know that the place where Jesus was crucified and buried was also outside the city walls. The Bishop of Jerusalem arrived at the Council of Nicaea and said, "I want to dig for the tomb of Christ, I want to look for the tomb of the resurrection - the cave, and I want to look on the edge of the forum right in the centre of the old City of Jerusalem". It was rather a delicate request because he wanted to look under the Temple of what the church historian, the Bishop of Caesarea - Bishop Eusebius, called 'That Licentious Nymph, Aphrodite'.

Now if you were trying to make up a plausible story to convince a gullible emperor that you had actually got on to the location of Christ's tomb, but you really didn't have a clue about it, you could have chosen a more plausible place than right in the heart of the city underneath one of the significant temples of Jerusalem. Constantine gave his consent initially. The Christian community were looking for the place where Christ was buried. In excavating under the Temple of Aphrodite, they came across some tombs, some burials, and duly identified one of them as the tomb where Christ was laid. It was an extraordinary place to look in the 4th century AD.

What has become clear from archaeological research over the last 25 years is even more extraordinary. Almost everywhere you dig in Jerusalem you can find rock cut caves, you can find places that were obviously used for tombs. You can actually find them very close to the Temple Mount itself, much closer into the centre of the ancient city. But if you could prove that in about 30 AD the city wall embraced this site, then we could say that whatever else is the case, that cannot be the resting place of Jesus Christ. In the archaeological investigations particularly associated with the name of Kathleen Kenyon about 25 years ago, it was established that the city wall of Jerusalem in 30 AD, about when we believe Christ to have been crucified, did indeed leave the site of the tomb discovered under the Temple of Aphrodite outside the city walls. But that was true only until 41 AD. By 41 AD the walls had been dramatically pushed out to include a much larger area, and certainly to include the site of the tomb which was discovered under the Temple of Aphrodite. But in 30 AD it was outside the city walls and that was already untrue 11 years later. So you have got to put yourself in the position of people looking in the 4th century AD who didn't have such sophisticated records and who anyway were separated from the appearance and the traditions of that city of King Herod by



two devastating sacks and in particular by the demolitions of the Emperor Hadrian. It would need to be a very strong tradition indeed to persuade them to look there in the first place, and it is remarkable that the plausibility of the location is to some extent increased by the sort of evidence which we have only been able to obtain (they couldn't have obtained it then) in the last 25 years - the evidence that this site did in fact lie outside the city wall in 30, but by 41 did not. So that was the first piece of archaeology.

Then the Emperor Constantine's mother, the Empress Helena, took a hand. Like great people travelling in the East, she usually found what she was looking for. What she was looking for was the Cross site and here is a very fascinating sub-plot. The cross was not a popular motif in Christian art in the very first centuries, but the cross was particularly associated with the rise to power of the Emperor Constantine. You all know the story of the vision that he saw - In Hoc Signo Vinces - he saw a vision of the cross before a climacteric battle against one of his rivals and the cross very much became part of the imperial treasury of symbols. The emphasis on the part of the churchmen who write about the discovery of the Holy Sepulchre, above all Bishop Eusebius, is all on the resurrection site, it's all on the tomb, it's all on the burial. When the Empress comes, what she wants is the cross. Because one of the complexities and difficulties of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which always confuses, bewilders and very often disappoints visitors is that there under one roof is supposed to be the site of Golgotha the crucifixion and the site of the burial, the tomb, the resurrection site as Christians believe. How do we sort that out? Well having got there, to our imperial archaeologists, to the Emperor Constantine, to the first discoveries underneath the Temple of Aphrodite, to the intervention of the Empress Helena, I will leave the story until the next lecture.

GRESHAM COLLEGE

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN JERUSALEM

2. Ravages of Fanaticism

The Reverend Professor R.J.C Chartres, M.A., B.D.  
Gresham Professor of Divinity

Lecture given in the Church of St Mary-le-Bow, London EC2  
on 13th December 1989

In these two lectures I am trying to provide some background to the issues being addressed in the Gresham Jerusalem Project. It is a sort of trailer to a very important lecture this evening at the City University being given by Mr. Cooper who has been in charge of the actual survey of the central structure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem - the so-called Edicule which encloses the site of the tomb itself. The lecture is on the scientific dimension of this whole exercise using the very new technique of photogrammetry which is of wide application in architecture and restoration. It can give you 3-D impressions of objects and has been used extensively on the Mansion House, preparatory to the restorations there. I hope that next year we shall be able to hear a final report from Professor Martin Biddle, leader of the team who have been examining this structure. We have had to do this examination urgently because the programme of restoration in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which has been rolling since 1959, has now reached the structure which encloses the tomb site and so any day now we hope actual restoration on that structure will begin. This has meant that it is crucial that the work should be done now with the full resources that modern science can provide. I am providing today some of the obvious background literature. Some of it is quite difficult to find because it is in various periodicals, but I hope that this very select bibliography that I have laid out will be of some assistance to you.

Last time we reached the point where the imperial archaeologists, the Emperor Constantine and his mother, had permitted work to begin on the site in Jerusalem where it was believed that Christ was both crucified and placed in a sepulchre. We saw what a very surprising place it was to actually begin to look for this tomb because when the search started in 326 AD, the site they were looking at was right in the centre of the City of Jerusalem. This of course corresponds to the surprise and the shock that visitors nowadays get when they visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and they find it hemmed in by the old city of Jerusalem and almost lost in a great sea of buildings and structures, some of them very old indeed. So even then in the 4th century it was a curious place to look. It was right on the edge of the forum of the City. We saw how it is quite difficult to reconstruct the locations and the Jerusalem of Jesus's own day because of the events that happened in 135 AD after the second Jewish rising and the Roman capture of the City. The Emperor Hadrian demolished a great deal of it and changed its name.

Jerusalem became known as Aelia Capitolina and a new city was laid out. We can still see traces of this Aelia in the present old City of Jerusalem. It is extremely difficult to get beneath this level, to identify the locations and the places which Jesus himself knew in his days in the first century AD. So in the 4th century it was a very curious choice. If you were trying to persuade an Emperor that you had identified the veritable scene of Christ's burial and you didn't really know where it was you might have chosen a more ostensibly plausible site. But if the local tradition was really strong then that would be why Bishop Macarius, when he went to the Council of Nicaea in 325 and asked for permission to excavate in a part of the Church of Jerusalem, said "Where we want to look is in this most embarrassing place beneath the Temple of what Bishop Eusebius called 'That Licentious Nymph, Aphrodite'. That is where they did in fact look.

We reflected in the last lecture on the fact that the one thing everybody has always known about the crucifixion and the burial of Jesus Christ is that it happened outside the city wall of Jerusalem. If we could prove that the city wall at about 30 AD actually embraced the site on which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built, we could then say that this probably is a fictitious tradition - that it is only a legendary place. We recalled last time that it would have been much more difficult to know for certain in the 4th century AD. Recent archaeological investigations, particularly associated with the name of Dame Kathleen Kenyon, have established beyond the peradventure that the site on which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built was indeed outside the city wall of Jerusalem in 30 AD but that already by 41 - only 11 years later - the city wall had been pushed out well beyond the Holy Sepulchre site to embrace it. So at exactly the right time it was indeed outside the city wall - this was a piece of information about which people in the 4th century could not have been so scientifically certain as we are now as a result of the fruits of recent archaeology. But they were certain that this was the place they wanted to look because of what seems like a very strong local tradition which overwhelmed the evident implausibilities of the site.

People have always been looking for something more atmospheric and plausible as the site of Christ's tomb and that is of course why General Gordon with his penchant for mystical geography (he went round seeing skulls in rocks and pelvic girdles in other rocky formations) identified the so-called garden tomb, which does indeed still lie outside the city walls of old Jerusalem, as the veritable tomb of the resurrection. But of course historically speaking this location has virtually nothing to recommend it and all the books which say that this is the place which Anglicans regard as the site of the resurrection are quite wrong and erroneous. This is a tradition established by General Gordon. The garden tomb is a wonderful atmospheric place to go and contemplate, but it really has no depth of historical association attached to it. The traditions however associated with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are remarkably strong and although you cannot beyond the peradventure say that the tomb that they located was, beyond all doubt, the actual tomb in which Jesus was laid, the tradition associating his resurrection with that place is very strong.

When I was in Jerusalem at the end of November, I actually saw a re-enactment of the crucifixion with Roman soldiers galloping around, rather giving themselves away I am afraid by wearing sneakers - this was a cut-budget attempt to portray the crucifixion and the events which followed. It was being made for Soviet TV. It is a most extraordinary thing that, now there is so much change in the world, a reconstruction of the crucifixion actually outside the 16th century city walls of Jerusalem was being made at the end of November for Soviet television. I couldn't get so much information because unfortunately the car had drawn up in their camera angle and the Russian producer rushed forward shouting a stream of very ugly language in Russian and we had to move. Interestingly, it is a reconstruction in which a Fellow of Gresham College, Metropolitan Kyrill, is due to take part when it is finally shown on Soviet TV.

So the actual site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is identified by tradition very closely with those climacteric events. After the Emperor had given permission for this excavation under the Temple of Aphrodite, his mother arrived on the scene to superintend the works. She played a very large part in beautifying, adorning, identifying and celebrating in the 4th century AD a great number of the holy places of the Holy Land, and Sinai as well. This was a great period, the first period in which Christians had been able to celebrate their faith in this public architectural manner. It has left us a number of fragments, notably the floor of the church in Bethlehem which was also built in this period of great enthusiasm for marking and celebrating the holy places which was one of Constantine's great preoccupations.

This visit of the Empress Helena is rather interesting. It is not actually mentioned in any historical source before the end of the 4th century. In particular there is a most puzzling and perturbing silence about the visit of the Empress and the possibility that she identified the site of Calvary and found fragments of the true cross. There is a puzzling silence about these events on the part of somebody who was in a position to know and who is our great authority for the earliest history of this site, and that is Eusebius of Caesarea. The church was organized in the Holy Land from Caesarea, so Eusebius as well as being a court historian of the Emperor Constantine and his biographer and panegyrist was also in charge of the church in the Holy Land. So if anyone knew what was going on, it was Eusebius and he is silent in what seems like a puzzling way about the visit of Helena and the identification of Calvary. You see what is always said in the earliest sources is that the church was looking for the Anastasis, for the site of the resurrection. They located the empty tomb. Now one of the things that always surprises and perturbs people who visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the very first time is that there is also celebrated and recalled the place of the crucifixion - Calvary itself. Quite simply they seem to be far too close and it looks rather fishy. It looks fishier if you remember that Bishop Eusebius (in a position to know, being the great friend of the imperial family) makes no mention of the visit of the Empress Helena, nor of her discovery of the relics of the true cross, nor of her identification of the site of Calvary.

There is a most interesting article which was written in 1985 (and you can find it in the Journal of Ecclesiastical History) by H.A. Drake who reflects on this silence of Eusebius about this part of the story. He advances a very interesting thesis. You realize that

the cross was not a very great theme in Christian art in the first centuries. The cross was of course an instrument of torture and it had shameful connections. Putting the cross at the heart of your religious practices and at the heart of your church would have been rather like exalting a carcinoma. It was a very ugly sign indeed. And of course it was a sign which people did not have sanitized as we do. There weren't marvellous crosses in gold and silver with roses on them. As the poet Goethe said 'Who put the roses on the cross?' because still by the 4th century, people would know what crucifixion looked like and what an appalling, shameful death it was. So for very obvious reasons the early Christians did not focus to any great extent upon the cross in their symbolic treasury. But of course the cross had become particularly associated with the Emperor and with the imperial dynasty. It was the cross which Constantine is reported to have seen in a vision on the eve of one of his most important victories which opened up the way for his accession to supreme power in the Roman Empire as the first Christian Emperor. You will remember those words with which he was encouraged on the eve of battle - In Hoc Signo Vincens (Conquer in this sign). So the cross was particularly associated with imperial dynasty.

How are we to understand this silence of Eusebius, which Drake by some very deft and interesting close examinations of his texts reveals is perhaps not so deafening and absolute as has sometimes been suggested? Is the attempt of Eusebius to play this down and to still fix attention on the Anastasis, on the resurrection, on the empty tomb, part of an attempt to ensure that the new symbolism so much associated with the imperial dynasty does not come to dominate Christian thought and theology and particularly does not come to dominate this site? Was that his motivation? Well this is very fascinatingly argued in Drake's article in the Journal of Ecclesiastical History and if you want more information about that I really do advise you to read it. It is very interesting and it is a fascinating glimpse of how the cross, through the agency of the imperial dynasty and the story of the Empress Helena, may well have come to occupy the central place it now has in Christian art and symbolism.

The relics of the true cross after the 4th century proliferated, and it is almost obligatory at this point to put in some sort of ironic reference - if we added all the relics of the true cross together we could make a forest of them. It may not be quite as derisory as we think. It has been suggested in recent work on relics of the true cross that the usual pattern of these relics was that a large cross was produced in which there was but a single splinter of the true cross actually at the join; that this was the Byzantine model and that actually the numbers of relics of the true cross in the earliest period was not that great. It may well be that those splinters could have come from whatever was discovered by the Empress Helena on the site of the Holy Sepulchre.

If we are still worried by the close juxtaposition of the place of the crucifixion and the place of the resurrection, just look at what it says in St John's Gospel in Chapter 19. 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jew's preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.' The New Testament evidence suggests that they were very close together. If you go to the very confusing place of the Church

of the Holy Sepulchre you might reflect upon that little extract from St John's Gospel in the light of new research which has tended to establish that John had access to reliable Jerusalem traditions which the other gospel writers did not have. John's Gospel of course has always in recent times been regarded as a great meditation, a poetic meditation on the events of Christ's teaching and his crucifixion and his resurrection. But increasingly over the last 10-15 years there has been an appreciation of the fact that in some of his historical details, John appears to have hold of an authentic Jerusalem tradition which the other gospel writers didn't have.

One of the most important discoveries in connection with this rehabilitation of the Gospel According to St John as a historical source is the excavations that have been done around the Pool of Bethesda which is also in the old city. It is next to St Ann's church and we have established, because of the recent excavations, that there was a tradition of healing there. There was a healing sanctuary and we have discovered all sorts of votive offerings. This particular pool was associated in Jesus's time with a cult of healing and if you read the details in John 5 you will see a description of one of the healings which actually took place at the hands of Jesus Christ at the Pool of Bethesda which fascinatingly enough begins with his question to the sick man - which is the question you have to ask of everybody who is sick, who has applied for healing - 'Do you want to be well?'. That is the most profound first question you must always ask and it is that question that was asked in the 5th chapter of St John's Gospel as it records the healing at the Pool of Bethesda. We have recently uncovered that pool and we now know that indeed this was a place where people came to be healed. So some of the detail of John's Gospel has been confirmed, archaeologically speaking, and this has led to a greater and greater confidence in some of the historical details of this gospel which certainly only 20 years ago very few scholars were prepared to grant.

What seemed to have happened when the cave, the sepulchre, was actually identified was this. The cave was cut out; we must imagine a sort of quarryside and various apertures in it. The cave that was identified as the tomb of our Lord was actually cut out of the living rock and was left standing there and a great space was cleared around it. That was the first step and it must have been an enormously difficult work. We have in Eusebius's words, testimony to the fact that the Emperor Constantine embellished and decorated this cave. "Above all", says Eusebius in his Life of Constantine, "he embellished the sacred grotto, the divine monument, as the principal point of the whole. The Emperor's magnificence in decorating this centrepiece with selected columns of abundant ornamentation made the venerable grotto shine under a glittering adornment". Now as we have seen in the discussion on the visit of the Emperor's mother, it may have not been the principal point for the Emperor, but it certainly was for the local church.

Probably at this time then, there was the cave and its carapace, its covering, all richly adorned in the open air, and the ceremonies would have taken place around it. That's what the earliest records suggest and that is also what recent archaeological research suggests. Then after that period, when the decorated cave was adored in the open air just surrounded by a great pavement, a rotunda was constructed rather in the style of the mausolea which

adorned the tombs of heroes and great men. We have some details of the ceremonies which went on in this great rotunda as early as the 380s in the travel diary of that redoubtable Gallic noblewoman Egeria. If you want a fascinating glimpse of the life of the early church in the 4th century, this first great age of Christian architecture and this age of the elaboration of liturgies, you could do no better than read the Journal of Egeria in the excellent edition by John Wilkinson who himself spent so long in Jerusalem working on the archaeology. Probably before the construction of that rotunda enclosing the pavement and the richly decorated grotto, a great basilica was consecrated which enclosed the site which you will remember seems to have been so peculiarly significant for the Emperor - the site of Calvary. That great basilica was consecrated in 335 AD.

These were the golden centuries of the church in the Holy Land and everywhere you go there are Byzantine monasteries, marvellous Byzantine churches, the elaborations of pilgrimages and liturgy. On the top of Massada, now famous because of its occupation by zealot warriors for 6 or 7 years, there was for two and a half centuries a Byzantine monastery and in so many other inconspicuous difficult rocky places there were Monks and there were Christian foundations.

This was the golden age of the Christian church in the Holy Land which really came to an end in one of the great ecological and cultural disasters which finally put an end to literally millennia of urban civilization in the the Near East. That great disaster was the war between the Byzantine empire and the Persian empire. In the early 7th century they fought each other nearly to exhaustion. In 614 Jerusalem was taken by a Persian army and that great basilica and the great rotunda was burnt and the adornments of the sacred grotto, which according to Eusebius glittered, were looted by the Persian army. It was patched up but it was not long after that Islam arrived in Jerusalem.

Islam arrived in a very different manner from the manner of the arrival of the Persians. Islam arrived with immense and extraordinary courtesy. In 638, which was only 6 years after the death of the prophet Mohammed, the Caliph Omar arrived with the Arab army and camped on the Mount of Olives and looked out, as I know so many of you have done, over the Kidron Valley (The Shady Valley) to the Holy City beyond the walls, to the Temple Mount and the other buildings. Caliph Omar didn't look very photogenic. He was very short, he was wearing dirty robes we are told, he was on a milk white camel who looked rather better than he did. He was very dark as well, his mother was a negress, his father was an Arab. He it was who arrived at Jerusalem in 638 at the head of the conquering Arab army. He was met (and this is one of the great contrasts, you can almost see it in your mind's eye) by the chief magistrate of the City of Jerusalem, the patriarch Sophronius, whose great church was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Here was a jewelled, well-bathed Byzantine aristocrat, and he handed over the keys of the City to the Caliph Omar who behaved with astonishing restraint and civility. He went first to the Temple Mount. You remember Jerusalem is a holy city for Muslims because at a very early date, chapter 17 in the Holy Koran was interpreted as referring to a mystical journey made by the prophet Mohammed from Mecca to the 'Further Mosque' - Al-Aqsa. It was there on the site of the Temple that a great ladder was set up on the rock now covered by the dome and up the ladder Mohammed ascended to have his vocation, his authority as a prophet,

validated in the place where all the great tradition of prophets had had their authority and their bona fides validated - the Holy City itself, Jerusalem. So only 6 years after his death with that interpretation of chapter 17 in his mind, the Caliph Omar went to have a look at the sites of the Temple Mount. We know now, and this is also quite recent information, that the Byzantines during their occupation of the City were just about to build a church over that rock which now shelters under the famous dome and that when they conquered the City, the Arabs simply used the Byzantine plans, built on them, and so perhaps even after the Arab conquest of the City, the Dome of the Rock can in some senses be regarded as the last gift of the Byzantine empire to the Holy City.

Then Omar went to have a look at the Christian Holy sites and in particular the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The hour of prayer came upon them and the patriarch Sophronius, being an immensely cultivated and civil character said to the Caliph, "Would you like to roll out your prayer mat and pray here?". And the Caliph said "That's very kind of you but I wouldn't do that if I were you because if I pray here, this church will be seized as a holy site for Muslims". So he took his prayer mat outside and prayed in the courtyard and there is still a Mosque of Omar in the courtyard which actually recalls the place where he went to pray having declined the civil invitation of the patriarch.

So in this period, relations between Christians and Muslims in the Holy City were on the whole very good and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as it had been patched up after the disastrous Persian assault in the City, survived. It survived very much in its 4th century form and it survived until the arrival of a very different kind of Islamic ruler who can hardly be called an Islamic ruler at all - the Caliph Hakim.

Now the Caliph Hakim was in charge of Jerusalem in the early 11th century, in 1009. He can hardly be called an Islamic ruler at all because he declared himself to be of divine origin and a cult was established centring upon his own person. Clearly he would have a particular animus towards Jesus Christ and his followers and in 1009 Al-Hakim set about in a very determined way to destroy the Christian holy sites which up to this point had largely survived. (Do not forget we have had nearly 4 centuries of Islamic occupation of Jerusalem.) We have an account of this destruction in the Chronicle of Yaya of Antioch. He says that in the Rotunda, everything was destroyed, save only that which was too difficult to demolish and that the grotto was broken up with pickaxe and hammer and indeed most of it was hewn up and carried off. So the idea is that the wood and all the fittings were taken away, as much of the structure as possible was demolished and the actual living rock of the cave was smashed up with pickaxes and indeed the materials were taken away. But there does appear to be some doubt in the Chronicle as to exactly how much damage was done and this of course has been one of the endeavours ever since, to try and understand how much of that original 4th century structure and the structure of the living rock which it enclosed survived the terrible devastation of Al-Hakim in 1009. That is one of the great abiding problems of the whole site and the whole exercise. Do you know that Al-Hakim's cult gave rise to the modern Druses? His chief minister was somebody called Al-Durazzi and after Hakim's fall from power Al-Durazzi led some of the Caliph's followers to settle in Jebel El Druse and of course they remain there to this day, having a very important part to play in



the various broils of Lebanon. The Druses have their origin in those events of the early 11th century - the Caliph Hakim and his heretical Islamic cult.

More recent investigations have shown that the huge structure of the rotunda survived perhaps to a greater extent than the chronicler of Antioch would suggest. In some places it is fairly clear that the 4th century structure, the walls of the rotunda which surrounds the site of the tomb of Christ, survive up to a height of about 11 metres. It was these 4th century walls that were rebuilt with financial help from the imperial capital in the middle of the 11th century in 1048. But the other church, the great basilica, which enclosed the site of Calvary was not rebuilt because by that time the Byzantine empire was very hard up and they simply did not have the financial resources.

When you go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and inspect it, most of what you can see is actually a Crusader church. The basilica which enclosed the Calvary site was not restored by the Byzantine Emperor in the middle of the 11th century when he rebuilt the Rotunda and it remained for the Crusaders after they conquered the City in 1099 to build a church which joins onto the Rotunda. That church which was completed in 1149 on the 50th anniversary of the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem is the church that remains to this day. The Crusader capture of Jerusalem of course was in startling contra-distinction to the way in which the Caliph Omar had entered the City. The story of the really dreadful massacre which took place, after the Crusaders breached the wall and poured in, sent shock waves throughout Islam and throughout the Middle East. In 1149 therefore, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was finally completed and dedicated. The present efforts to restore the church, efforts which have been made since 1959 - so we are talking about a 30 year programme of restoration - have been addressed to trying to get back to what the main church looked like in 1149. That's the doctrine. A lot of work has been done and the thing has been made safe.

Attention now, therefore, is turning very much to the restoration of that central structure, the edicule - the central structure which embraces the tomb site itself. Any of you who have been there know that it is in a very parlous state. It is held together at the top by a great iron band. It has suffered grievously in modern times by two terrible events. The great fire of 1808 which destroyed certainly the roof of the Rotunda and much of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and gravely damaged the edicule. Also the earthquake of 1927 which shook the whole thing up. That is when the British authorities actually put the great iron band around the edicule, simply to hold it together. So restoration is long overdue. But before it happens, it is obviously extremely important that there should be the most precise and accurate record of what is there now to solve some of the artistic, historical and archaeological problems that I have glanced at in this rather brief background look at the history of the structure.

How much of the living rock is there? If you read the preliminary report, prepared largely by Professor Martin Biddle, of the work that has been done on the Holy Sepulchre and its edicule this year, you see that it may be that in the inmost chamber of the edicule it is possible to identify rather more of the living rock than we had previously thought had survived, particularly the terrible

destruction wrought by the agents of the Caliph Al-Hakim. So it is essential to get an exact description and survey of this edifice before the work of restoration is put in hand. This is a very delicate matter because as you probably know the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is under the administration of a number of religious communities. Ethiopians on the roof, where they were expelled after they weren't able, because of their poverty, to pay Otterman taxes. (That's why they lost a rather better position in the church and got expelled to the roof.) The Copts, but most important of all the Greeks, the Armenians and the Latins, largely Franciscans. Now these are all parties to what is known as the 'status quo' and that is the agreement that covers almost everything in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from, who cleans which windows to which door ledges are whose responsibility. It is an agreement which is now very old, which, when it is breached arouses great passions. Visiting Jerusalem 3 years ago I was told by a Coptic friend that there had actually just been fisticuffs because there had been an encroachment by people cleaning bits that weren't really theirs to clean.

People are very watchful and even that brave conqueror General Allenby when he took over Jerusalem in 1917, on being met with a delegation carrying the keys of the Holy Sepulchre, simply handed them back and said in a wonderfully gruff military laconic way, "Status quo" and really endorsed the ancient arrangements between the communities which govern the administration of the church. It's very much to the credit of everybody involved in this extraordinary project this year, a project which led to the team being permitted to stay in this church overnight to do the necessary photography without being disturbed by the constant stream of pilgrims, that the delicate diplomatic relations which are necessary to achieve anything in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were carried through with such finesse.

It is a wonderful thing to actually go to pay your respects at the tomb. I must confess that when the queue is very long to get in the front door where the Greeks are in charge, I nearly always move round to the back. There you will find, abutting the site of the tomb, a marvellous little chapel which is manned by the Copts, by Egyptian Christians.

It should be possible next year for Professor Biddle to give a final report on the new view we will have of these structures, and I hope that it might be possible for him to give one of the Gresham lectures on that subject.

So there we have some of the background to the work that is being currently done on a site which in a most extraordinary way echoes one of the great themes of the holy sites in the City of Jerusalem, and that is its emptiness. Remember, the Temple of Jerusalem is virtually the only temple in the ancient world to be without a cult statue - empty. The tomb, unlike the great Mausoleum on Red Square, is an empty tomb and this is because they are monuments of the only God who actually exists. That is the God we don't create, we don't project, we don't confect - even out of our best imaginings and our highest aspirations. The God who is so infinitely beyond us that the only way He can be properly represented is by no image, no body at all. And that is one of the great and wonderful lessons of the holy places of Jerusalem.

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