

Chapter 5 Christianity's Pseudo-Calvary

While stalwart Judeo-Christians languished on Mount Sion in their Church of God synagogue, angrily denounced by Byzantine clerics, monks, nuns and pilgrims alike, Roman Emperor Constantine the Great ordered the construction of a new basilica in 325. Its purpose was to honor the newly discovered Tomb of Jesus and Calvary. Supposedly these had lie hidden beneath the Capitoline Temple to Jupiter, for two centuries. The Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulcher would stand on the site where the Romans had built a magnificent pagan temple (Murphy-O'Connor 1997:27-28).



The mosaic in the great apse of the Basilica of St. The mosaic in the great apse of the Basilica of St. Pudenciana in Rome shows major Jerusalem landmarks ca. 400. Located at 160 Via Urbana, presumably built over the house of Roman senator Rufus Pudens (sometimes thought to be the Rufus of Romans 16:13 and Pudens of 2 Timothy 4:21).

The emperor had to order the construction because the people of *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, Roman Jerusalem, did not want it nor supported it. Why? For it was a project of the Gentile Christians known as Byzantines to reach their political and religious ends. The vast majority of the city's population consisted of

pagans and Judeo-Christians and they resented the intrusion of Byzantine Orthodox Christians.

Indeed, Jerusalem's pagan population resisted and opposed all forms of Christianity for over two centuries. Pagan residents of *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, the despised enemies of the Orthodox, oppressed Orthodox

Christians during Diocletian's reign of terror, shared in the spoils taken from them, and celebrated as they were put to death. Their Temple of Jupiter, venerated by pagan priests and devotees, remained a pervasive stench in Orthodox nostrils as a sign of intolerance and a symbol of pagan oppression of Christians whether Gentile or Judeo-Christian.

The persecution of Diocletian, 303–310 CE, instigated by Galerius, was a horrendous time throughout the empire. Many Christians suffered incredible torture and martyrdom. These circumstances changed on April 30, 311 when, while on his death bed, Emperor Galerius reluctantly issued an edict of tolerance. The edict reinstated the privileges and properties of Christians "as long as they do not interfere with public order" a condition apparently designed to minimize reprisals.

Eusebius says, even though the persecution continued in some regions and resentment ran high, that the decree had the effect "of seeing in every city reunions in the churches, most frequent meetings of the Christians, during which they celebrated the accustomed rites" (Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 9.1.8; Oulton 1986:333; Boyle 1955:381; Bagatti 1971b:45). In 313 Constantine finally brought the persecution to a halt. In an alliance with Licinius at Milan, in what is commonly known as the "Edict of Milan", the parties agreed that the persecution against Christians would stop and their churches, cemeteries, and other properties would be returned to them (González 1984:107; cf., Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 9.9).

In Jerusalem, a city deeply divided by competitive religious ideologies, Macarius became the Byzantine Orthodox bishop in 314. While the pagan Roman persecution officially ended, the bitterness, resentment, and hatred between pagan and Christian factions had not. Payback time, however, had come. Orthodox contempt of Jerusalem's pagans, especially the ones who instigated and profited from the persecution and dispossession of Christians, were neither forgiven nor forgotten. Vengeance was to follow.

The Ambitious Plan of Bishop Marcarius

Bishop Macarius (bishop, 314–333 CE) conceived of a clever way to strike at the heart of the pagan enemies of the Orthodox. If the Emperor could be persuaded that the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth lie beneath the site of the Capitoline temple, the central sanctuary of Aelia Capitolina, then this

despicable abomination might be torn down. Moreover, as a separate shrine or temple to Aphrodite-Venus, a venue for temple prostitution and pagan orgiastic rites, also stood on the site, it could be destroyed and its despised cult dispersed as well. Elimination of the Capitoline temple and the Venus shrine would seriously damage Jerusalem's pagans and not only advance Orthodoxy but also solidify Macarius' power and influence in the city.

It is doubtful that Macarius expected to find any tomb beneath the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter let alone that of Jesus. There is no evidence, literary or archaeological, suggesting that during the Apostolic Age that the tomb of Jesus itself held any special significance nor that it ever served as a cult center for the ancient church. Early Judeo-Christians, as participants in Jewish culture, abhorred idolatry and did not venerate places as holy as did illiterate superstitious pagans.

When the Romans constructed their Capitoline temple in Aelia Capitolina in ca. 135 CE, selecting a site to fit their own master plan and needs, Christianity was neither a threat nor an issue. There was no reason for the Romans to concern themselves about where Jesus may have been entombed one way or the other. In 135 CE Christians, whether Gentile or Judeo-Christian, were hardly a threat as at the time they were almost exclusively nonviolent pacifists and as there could not have been more than 25–50 thousand of them in the entire empire.

The tradition that the Tomb was to be found under the Capitoline temple, which he understood as a temple dedicated to Venus, appeared secure to Bellarmino Bagatti. As a Roman Catholic priest-scholar heavily invested in the traditions of the Church and its holy sites, he nevertheless held that it was very uncertain as to the exact place where the tomb lay as the temple covered a great area. In his opinion:

From 326, the year of Helena's visit to Jerusalem, to 135 when the temple of Venus was erected, there are 191 years and therefore the memory must have been pretty vague, or it was based on writings, because all those who were there at the time of Hadrian were dead. The authors speaks of "inhabitants" and of "Jews", and these can only be the Judaeo-Christians. Actually they only were present at the time of the building of the temple of Venus, and they only were interested to transmit from father to son the memory of the tomb of the Lord. The other Jews, who had not accepted Christ, were not interested

in the tomb of Jesus and after 135 they could no longer live in Jerusalem. (Bagatti 1971b:58.)

On the surface it seems sensible that a succession of oral traditions about the tomb's location would have been continuously available among the Judeo-Christian population of Jerusalem. Dan Bahat, writing in the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, argued that very point. He wrote:

The fact that it had indeed been a cemetery, and that this memory of Jesus' tomb survived despite Hadrian's burial of it with his enclosure fill, speaks to the authenticity of the site. Moreover, the fact that the Christian community in Jerusalem was never dispersed during this period, and that its succession of bishops was never interrupted supports the accuracy of the preserved memory that Jesus had been crucified and buried here. (Bahat 1986:37.)

Preserved by whom? If this tradition persisted in either the Judeo-Christian or Gentile Christian communities of Jerusalem then why was this not made known at the time? The historical evidence suggests that the bishops, particularly Eusebius, held deep doubts about the authenticity of the site. If this persisting tradition did in fact exist Macarius certainly did not offer this obvious evidence to Eusebius or to other bishops the proof of authenticity. Why? They knew of no such tradition. The tradition argument appears, on the surface, as plausible to present-day scholars seeking to explain why Macarius and his associates accepted this site and tomb as authentic but it would have been unconvincing in 325 CE. The whole argument is without verifiable evidence. It is an claim without foundation.

In a peculiar exercise of mental gymnastics Bahat reasoned that "perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the authenticity of the site...is that it must have been regarded as such an unlikely site when pointed out to Constantine's mother Queen Helena in the fourth century" (Bahat 1986:37). If low probability is the strongest argument for authenticity then the tomb's authenticity, in any scholarly sense, has no basis in fact whatsoever. Rather than ridiculous, unfounded and foolish speculation, the standard of proof in biblical archaeology is, at the very least, a high degree of certainty established beyond a reasonable doubt.

The lingering doubt about the Holy Sepulcher being the site of the tomb of Jesus among Cyril's catechumens, expressed in a ca. 347 or 348

catechetical lecture at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, provides more evidence that the supposed tomb of Jesus simply was an aristocratic family cave tomb with a round blocking stone from the Second Temple period. When his catechumens asked Cyril for proof of its authenticity he was unable to offer it (Cyril Catachetical Lectures 13.35; see Parrot 1957:56-57). Eusebius, who placed little import on holy sites because he believed that God would not come to those who sought him in "lifeless matter and dusky caves" but rather to "souls purified and prepared with rational and clear minds", had doubts as well (Eusebius Proof of the Gospel 5, Introduction; Ferrar 1920a:228-229; Armstrong 1966:175).

Eusebius knew the traditions of the Judeo-Christians identifying Eleona Cave on the Mount of Olives and the Holy Church of God (the Cenacle or Coenaculum) on Aelia's western hill as significant sacred sites. Pilgrims would gather for prayer at the Eleona Cave. In his *Proof of the Gospel* (Eusebius 1920), written about 303, Eusebius did not refer to any traditions regarding the Tomb and Golgotha in connection with the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter site but mentioned the Eleona Cave as significant (Eusebius *Demonstratio Evangelica* 6.18; cf., Wilkinson 1983:173, 177). Eusebius reported that:

The Mount of Olives is therefore literally opposite to Jerusalem and to the east of it, but also the Holy Church of God, and the mount upon which it was founded, of which the Saviour teaches: "A city set on a hill cannot be hid, raised up in place of Jerusalem that is fallen never to rise again", and thought worthy of the feet of the Lord, is figuratively not only opposite Jerusalem, but east of it as well, receiving the rays of the divine light, and become much before Jerusalem and near the Sun of Righteousness himself. (Eusebius *Demonstratio Evangelica* 6.18.)

While not a popular hypothesis some have suggested that the Eleona Cave, lying about 100 yards to the south and slightly to the west of the monticulus or hillock on the Mount of Olives (the small knoll described in 333 CE by the Bordeaux Pilgrim (Pilgrim of Bordeaux 595; Wilkinson 1971:160) was the actual Tomb of Jesus with the monticulus the spot, or near the place, of the Crucifixion. Murphy-O'Connor held that it was unlikely that the Eleona Cave was originally a tomb but offered no rationale. He wrote:

The cave acquired its present shape under the chisels of the C4 builders. There were two entrances, one opposite the other; the cutting near the apse may have been the original entrance. In preparing the cave the builders broke through into a CI AD kokhim tomb. They blocked the hole with masonry which has now been removed; the tomb can be entered via the steps at the end opposite the apse. It seems unlikely that the venerated cave was originally a tomb; had the builders cut away kokhim graves it would have been much wider. (Murphy-O'Connor 1998:126.)

A *kokim* (pl. *kokhim*) or loculus (pl. *loculi*) grave is a horizontal recess or niche, usually about 6 feet deep, 1.5-2.0 feet wide, and 1.5-2.0 feet high (from the niche floor), in a burial cave or a rock-cut tomb. A loculus would not only serve as the place for the primary burial of a deceased party but sometimes functioned as a repository for an ossuary for placement of the bones of the deceased party after the corpse had decomposed (Kloner 1999:24, 28-29). Wilkinson, who commented on the crude construction of these five *kokhim* graves, wrote:

It is hardly likely that this particular chamber was used for burying the bishops of Jerusalem, since it is a crude affair, which obviously existed before Constantine's church. We are told, however, that their tombs were at the church, and therefore they cannot have been far away. (Wilkinson 1983:122.)

The Doubts of Eusebius Pamphilus

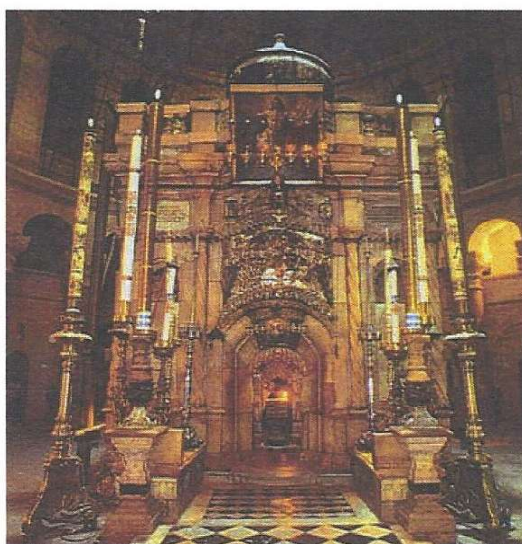
The implication is that Eusebius Pamphilus (also Eusebius of Caesarea) either suspected that the Eleona Cave was Jesus' tomb and the *monticulus* the place of Jesus' execution but lacked sufficient evidence to argue the matter or that he wanted Constantine to set a sufficient standard of proof for authenticating any proffered tomb as that of Jesus. In any case he did not appear to know what the criteria were for the selection of the site nor for the identification of Jesus' tomb. According to Bagatti:

Eusebius, the first to write, about ten years after the event, at which he assisted, in *Vita Constantini* (3,25-45: PG 20, 1085-1105) is preoccupied with the angle to contrast the desire of the pagans had to hide the Holy Sepulcher, and how, victoriously, it returned to splendor: but he has not troubled to tell us either who carried out the excavations, or the criterion used in selecting the site. He refers, it is true, to the visit of St. Helena to the Holy Places, but he does not connect this evidently with the Holy Sepulcher. (Bagatti 1971b:57.)

In 326 a concerned Eusebius requested an audience with Constantine to present a scriptural discourse on the subject of Jesus' sepulcher. The emperor standing, refusing to be seated on his throne despite several requests by Eusebius, heard him out and the matter so ended (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 4.33).

Eusebius the careful historian did not seem to understand that to Constantine, an astute and patient statesman, historical veracity had little to do with important matters of state. Constantine's calculated decisions were decidedly political. The tomb of Jesus, authentic or not, would strengthen Greco-Roman Christianity and thereby advance the security and stability of the empire.

Eusebius' continuing doubts about the factualness of the Capitoline temple site as the authentic location of the Tomb and Calvary were the misgivings of a troubled true believer. In his dedicatory remarks at the 335 dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, occurring on the 30th anniversary of Constantine's reign, he again raised the authenticity matter. He beseeched the emperor, who was not physically present but his representatives



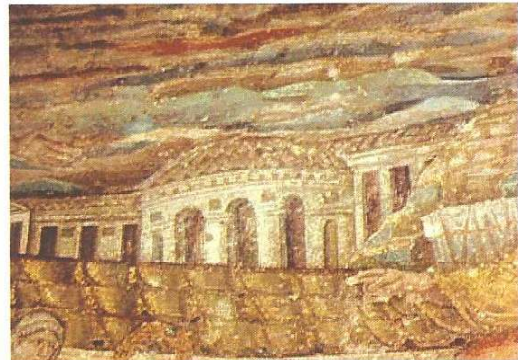
The Edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Artisans cut away rock surrounding the tomb to form a monument encasing the tomb in a structure called the Κουβούκλιον (Kouvouklion; Greek for small compartment) or Edicule (Latin: aediculum, small building) in the center of a rotunda called the Anastasis.

were in attendance (Armstrong 1996:189-190), to show him and the assembled bishops "the convincing proofs...which caused you to raise up that sacred edifice" (Eusebius *The Oration of Eusebius Pamphilus* 18; Eusebius 1986b:610). Apparently the emperor kept any questioning bishops and doubters at bay by resorting to the "God revealed it to me in a dream" defense. Once enunciated he needed not repeat it and accordingly, as to Eusebius' remarks at the dedicatory ceremony, the emperor's response was official silence. There was no hint of a latent Judeo-Christian memory.

The oral tradition argument provided a convenient pretext for Macarius' selection of the Capitoline temple location as the Tomb of Jesus site but he had an ulterior motive. Macarius' selection of the site of the Capitoline temple as the Tomb site was not made on the basis of some Judeo-Christian tradition. The circumstances suggest a more pragmatic reason. The excavation of the Capitoline temple was a clever ruse devised by bishop Macarius to reach an important political objective—the destruction of the heart of the city's paganism. This was perfect reprisal.

Macarius' followers believed the tomb of Jesus was beneath the Capitoline temple and that the pagans had destroyed the tomb to denigrate Jesus memory, and built their temple over the holy site. Eusebius, who participated in the demolition of the Capitoline temple and clearing the area beneath its platform, wrote that finding the tomb of Jesus was "beyond all hope" and "contrary to expectation" (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.29). Either he thought the pagans had destroyed it or did not believe the Tomb was at this location.

Bagatti held that the "conviction that the pagans had destroyed all, should have been very deeply rooted, if Constantine himself in a letter to bishop Macarius judged the finding a great miracle" (Bagatti 1971b:58; see Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.30; Eusebius 1986a:528). The "action of Macarius," said Bagatti,



The building shown above in the great apse of the Basilica of St. Pudenziana is the Anastasis as it appears in the CE 400 mosaic.

"employing the imperial family to destroy it, could not be done without a good reason, because if the desired tomb were not found, it could have unpleasant consequences" (Bagatti 1971b:57). Perhaps there was much less risk involved than Bagatti thought. The implication of the emperor's reported reference to "a great miracle" is that Constantine did not expect the tomb to be found any more than Macarius. The earliest account of the excavation is that of Eusebius and he does not mention any special involvement of the dowager empress Helena Augusta in the matter. She occupied herself searching for holy sites practicing her own form of holy

archaeology not overseeing the big dig at Jerusalem. Thus, the excavation appeared to be more to destruct the Capitoline temple than to discover the Jesus' tomb.

In 325, while at the Council at Nicaea, with a twist of political intrigue, Macarius approached the imperial family to interest Constantine the Great in searching for the tomb of Jesus below the Capitoline temple platform (Bagatti 1971b:48). Karen Armstrong, British author and commentator known for her books on comparative religion, held that:

Makarios did not get everything he wanted, but it seems likely that it was at Nicaea that he proposed a scheme that would have far more impact on the status of Aelia than a cautiously worded conciliar directive and would do far more to ensure the eventual victory of Athanasius' theology than the creed signed by the reluctant bishops. Makarios asked Constantine's permission to demolish the Temple of Aphrodite and unearth the Tomb of Christ, which was said to be buried beneath it. (Armstrong 1996:179.)

Macarius succeeded. Constantine, who had intended to visit the Holy Land but could not do so due to matters of state, had already sent his mother Helena. She arrived in Jerusalem late in 326, shortly before her death (ca. 327) at age 80, on an imperial progress to the Holy Land and the eastern provinces. On this extravagant excursion, she made the imperial gift of two basilicas—the basilica on the Mount of Olives enshrining the Elcona Cave and the basilica at Bethlehem enshrining the so-called Cave of the Nativity (Armstrong 1996:179, 186-187; Finegan 1992:xvii). Helena arrived in Jerusalem late in 326 during the planning of the Martyrdom and the excavations of The Tomb (Armstrong 1996:187; cf., Bagatti 1971b:56-57).

The Shocking Discovery of Jesus' Tomb

When the workmen came across a first-century Jewish cemetery beneath the platform it undoubtedly shocked Macarius who, understanding the potential of the discovery, promptly seized the opportunity to find Jesus' tomb. Soon the excavators produced a first-century style tomb, with a rolling stone in a stone track to close off its entrance, which they proudly claimed was that of Jesus of Nazareth. Round blocking stones were quite common in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods (2nd-7th centuries CE) but in the Early Roman Period this was not the case.

Of the over 900 rock tombs discovered in and around Jerusalem from Herodian times only four had round blocking stones. The rest were squared. In Jesus' day round blocking stones, set in stone tracks, were extremely rare and found only in the tombs of wealthy and distinguished families. This was neither the kind of stone placed at Jesus' tomb nor the kind of tomb into which Joseph of Arimathea placed him. Jesus' tomb was a standard small burial room, with a standing pit and burial benches along three sides, with a square blocking stone placed at its entrance (Kloner 1999:23).

Just before the High Sabbath of Nisan 15, Pilate ordered Jesus' body to be given over to Joseph of Arimathea. He hastily removed it from the cross, covered it with a linen burial shroud, and placed it on a burial bench in his own new tomb, a small burial cave, which he had hewn out in the rock (Matthew 27:60). Before he left he moved a large square stone against the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46). In both verses the Greek word *proskulio*, the only two usages of it in the New Testament, can mean rolled or moved.

The tomb claimed by Macarius to be the Tomb of Jesus, however, had a round blocking stone not a square one. In Macarius' day round blocking stones were common. In that context one would expect the Greek word *proskulio*, used only in Matthew 27:60 and Mark 15:46, to be erroneously understood in context as rolled and not as moved. The workers, believing that the stone on Jesus' tomb had been rolled away, understandably thought this to be Jesus' tomb as it was apparently the only tomb found there with a rolling stone. The rest had simple square blocking stones.

Cyril, ca. 348, when lecturing in the new Church of the Holy Sepulcher, confirmed that the stone at the presumed tomb of Jesus was not only present at the tomb but that it was a rolling stone. He corroborated the presence of "the stone which was laid on the door, which lies to this day by the tomb" (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catachetical Lectures* 13.39; Schaff 1989:??)

and also said "the rock of the sepulcher which received Him; the stone also shall rise up against the face of the Jews, for it saw the Lord; even the stone which was then rolled away, itself bears witness to the Resurrection, lying there to this day" (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catachetical Lectures* 14.22; Schaff 1989:??).

Jerome, soon after the death of Paula⁹⁰ on January 26, 404, wrote an obituary (Wilkinson 1977:1-2) containing an account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 386 CE and her visit to Jerusalem's holy places (Jerome Letter 108; Jerome 1989:195-212; Wilkinson 1977:47-49). He said, acknowledging the presence of the stone, "on entering the Tomb of the Resurrection she kissed the stone which the angel removed from the sepulcher door" (Jerome Letter 108 at 9.1; Wilkinson 1977:49).

Adomnan, ca. 650, reported Arculf's description of his many visits to the Anastasis. There he entered the tomb, which Constantine had artisans rework into a small building, into an antechamber whose floor was about three palms lower than the Sepulcher within. It was the mouth of this tomb where "the stone was rolled and then rolled back when the Lord rose again" inside of which "contains the Lord's Sepulcher, which has been cut into the rock on the north side" and by Arculf's measurements was seven feet long. "The whole thing is a single shelf stretching from head to foot without division, which would take one person lying on his back...like a cave with its opening facing the south part of the tomb, and is made with a low roof" (Adomnan 2.1; Wilkinson 1977:96). By Arculf's day artisans had reworked this rolling stone into two altars.

This is the place to say something about the Stone...which after the lord's crucifixion and burial, with several men pushing it, was rolled against the door of his burial place. Arculf reports that it was split, and divided into two pieces. The smaller piece has been shaped and squared up into an altar, which is to be seen set up in the round church we have mentioned in front of the door of the Lord's Tomb, the small building already described. The larger part of this stone has also been cut to shape, and forms a second square altar which stands, covered with linen, in a position at the east of this church. (Adomnan 3.1;) (Wilkinson J. , 1977, p. 96).

The excavators had uncovered a family burial cave with a standing pit, a bench on the north side, and a rolling blocking stone, which they believed the Tomb of Jesus. One could not expect less from true believers, victims

⁹⁰ Paula was the daughter of Blesilla and Rogatus, from the clan of the Furi Camilli. Paula married the nobleman Toxotius with whom she had four daughters, Blaesilla, Paulina, Eustochium, and Rufina and a boy, also named Toxotius. Information about Paula's early life is recorded by Jerome. In his Letter 108, he states that she had led a luxurious life and held a great status. She dressed in silks, and had been carried about the city by her eunuch slaves.

of a classic hermeneutic circle⁹¹, caught up in the self-fulfilled prophecy syndrome. Moreover, since it was general knowledge that Calvary had to be close to the tomb, the excavators soon managed to find that site as well. Such electrifying discoveries, believed by the ardent faithful Orthodox to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, unsurprisingly called for the construction of a new edifice—the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The discovery served Macarius' personal ambitions and his objective of pulling down the seat of power of the pagan cult and promoting the importance of Jerusalem over Caesarea but the emperor's even more.

The Incredible Deception

Constantine the Great intended the excavation from its inception to be a grand success whether or not a tomb was found. The spin, in this incredible ruse, was that the pagan builders of the Capitoline temple had destroyed Jesus' tomb in the first century. According to Karen Armstrong, Constantine the Great "knew that his Christian empire needed symbols and monuments to give it a historical resonance" (Armstrong 1996:179). He recognized the need of Greco-Roman Christianity for significant symbols to consolidate itself and thereby strengthen the empire. His actions demonstrate his intent to create not only a memorial to commemorate the death of Jesus but also to establish memorials at the sites of his birth and ascension as well. These were important matters of state where symbolism had more importance than authenticity. Armstrong raised the question, as others have, as to exactly how certain could the Christians be that Golgotha and The Tomb were really under the Capitoline temple. In her words:

⁹¹ All interpretation involves a circular reasoning structure involving a projection of a fore-structured understanding, rather than the purely objective relation of whole and parts. Any detail, such as an object or word, is understood in terms of the whole, and the whole in terms of the detail. For example, advocates of the Thursday Crucifixion hypothesis interpret every piece of evidence, not objectively from the evidence itself, but understanding it and spinning it in terms of their mindset. Other examples include astrology, dualism, and scientific creationism. People locked in hermeneutic circles normally remain caught therein until faced with irreconcilable, overwhelming evidence to the contrary. People in this logic dilemma often reject all evidence to the contrary and choose to remain deceived. It is perhaps the most fundamental flaw in hermeneutics giving interpretation a limited, dubious role in the search for fact and truth.

The pagans of Aelia would be understandably enraged if they lost their temple for nothing. Emperor and church alike would suffer an unacceptable embarrassment, not to mention the fact that if the excavations drew a blank, this might reveal a worrying lacuna at the heart of imperial Christianity. (Armstrong 1996:179.)

This was apparently not of concern to the emperor who simply exploited the political potential of an opportunity to put an important basilica on the Capitoline temple site when he approved and ordered the excavation. "This object he had indeed for some time kept in view," wrote Eusebius, "and had foreseen, as if by the aid of a superior intelligence,⁹² that which should afterwards come to pass" (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.29; Eusebius 1986a:528). In any case, in 326, following the unexpected discovery, Constantine formally ordered the building of the basilica in Jerusalem upon the site claimed to be the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth. Macarius, "the bishop of Aelia had certainly achieved a coup by masterminding the discovery of the tomb" (Armstrong 1996:186). Constantine wrote to Macarius:

Indeed, the nature of this miracle as far transcends the capacity of human reason as heavenly things are superior to human affairs. For this cause it is ever my first, and indeed my only object, that, as the authority of the truth is evincing itself daily by fresh wonders, so our souls may all become more zealous, with all sobriety and earnest unanimity, for the honor of the Divine law. I desire, therefore, especially, that you should be persuaded of that which I suppose is evident to all beside, namely, that I have no greater care than how I may best adorn with a splendid structure that sacred spot, which, under Divine direction, I have disencumbered as it were of the heavy weight of foul idol worship; a spot which has been accounted holy from the beginning in God's judgment, but which now appears holier still, since it has brought to light a clear assurance of our Saviour's passion. (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.30; Eusebius 1986a:528.)

Bagatti argued that there were those in Jerusalem, specifically in its pagan community, who resisted the project (Bagatti 1971a:13, 1971b:57). The construction of the new facility took ten years, CE 326–335. With its dedication, in 335, the Judeo-Christians held control of the primitive center

⁹² One would suppose Eusebius had God in mind but the power working through this cruel emperor was demonic.

of the Church of God on Mt. Sion with the bishops of Orthodox Gentile stock installed at the Holy Sepulcher (Bagatti 1971a:10).

While a memorial to the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, visited by millions of pilgrims over the centuries, the ancient Church of the Holy Sepulcher is but an unfortunate hoax and fraud. The Tomb of Jesus of Nazareth does not stand today in Jerusalem's ancient Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The rock-cut tomb now covered by the Edicule, falsely acclaimed in 325/6 to be the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid in the early evening of the day of the crucifixion, served to fulfill a bishop's religious revenge and ambitions and to realize an emperor's political and religious objectives. The place of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection remain to be found. They certainly do not lie on the one-time site of the Capitoline Temple to Jupiter. The next task of the Orthodox was to relieve the Judeo-Christians of Roman Jerusalem of their Holy Church of God synagogue.