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## **RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ROLES OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE**

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines changes to the role of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (CHS) from its construction to the Latin Kingdom and argues that these changes reflect shifts in Christian perception of sacred space. When it was first built, the CHS was only a monument to the profound event of Christ's resurrection. During the Heraclian dynasty of the Byzantine Empire, the very structure of the CHS became sacred and Jerusalem became revered as the city of the Holy Sepulchre. As Muslims conquered Jerusalem in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, the CHS became increasingly emblematic of Christianity itself. Eventually, the CHS was used as a rallying cry to incite European Christians into a crusade. During the Crusader Period, the CHS was transformed into a symbol of Frankish rule. As pilgrims became more intimate with the CHS, Jerusalem's sacred geography was expanded from only the CHS to include sites encompassing all aspects of Jesus's life. With these changes to the roles of the CHS, Christians went from originally distrusting sacred space, to embrace the church as their sole axis mundus (sacred space), to accepting the presence of multiple axis mundi on earth; the CHS was among them.*

### **Keywords**

Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, Christianity, Sacred Space

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## **1. Introduction**

When it was built in 326 AD, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (CHS) was merely a monument to the most important event in Christianity—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Over time, the CHS slowly became emblematic of Christianity itself to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Moreover, after the Sassanid destruction of the CHS in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, this church assumed importance among Christians equal to that of the Jewish temple among Jews. Its very structure became sacred, not just the events that it commemorated. And, as Christian conflicts with Muslims intensified, the CHS was often used as a proxy for this political and territorial struggle. The CHS increasingly became used to unite the squabbling Christian kingdoms in Europe against a perceived common “opponent.” After Jerusalem was captured by the Christian Crusaders, yet another shift took place: the CHS became a proxy in internal power struggles between Christian groups in Jerusalem. Moreover, the importance of this church shifted in Western Christendom, becoming increasingly associated with Christ’s resurrection rather than his burial. Additionally, the CHS, although still prominent, was no longer the sole focus of Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The Christian sacred geography of Jerusalem (and Christian pilgrims) was expanded to encompass the sites of various important events in the life of Christ, later known as Stations of the Cross. Ultimately, the changes to this church’s role from its construction to the Latin Kingdom reflect shifts in Christian perception of sacred space.

## **2. An Early Christian Monument and Symbol of Romanized Christianity**

The CHS is the most important Christian holy site in Jerusalem, as it is a monumental church that commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church was built by Helena, the mother of Constantine I, and Makarios, the Bishop of Jerusalem, over a stone quarry, which, according to tradition, contained the tomb of Jesus Christ (Kelley, 2020, p. 70). In the scriptures, Jesus’s tomb was “hewn in the rock,” which is usually interpreted to be a hillside tomb in the outskirts of Jerusalem (*The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Matt. 27:60). This fits the description of most 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish tombs, which were similarly located on hillsides, outside the walls of cities (Kelley, 2020, p. 66).

Having gained favor during the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, Bishop Makarios secured permission from Constantine to build a religious monument over an area that according to local tradition, contained the site of Jesus’s resurrection. According to Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, the

builders destroyed a temple of the goddess Venus already built over the site; the demolition team uncovered a rock tomb, which was identified as the sepulcher of Christ (Eusebius, 1999, p. 1.16). Constantine then commissioned a grand monument to the resurrection of Christ, which became the CHS (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 179, 181).

The church in its original form was split into 3 buildings: a martyrium, a triportico, and an anastasis that highlighted key aspects of Jesus' divinity. The martyrium, otherwise known as the Basilica of St. Constantine, was built in the style of a basilica, a domed Roman public building. The triportico was a courtyard of colonnades built over the traditional site of Calvary, otherwise known as Golgotha in Aramaic (Stephenson, 2015, p. 206). In the New Testament, Golgotha, which means "place of the skull," is the hill where it is thought that Jesus was crucified (*The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Matt. 27:33).

Across the courtyard from the martyrium was the focal point of the church. A rotunda called the "Anastasis" was built over the place Makarios purportedly found the tomb of Jesus (McMahon, 1910). In Greek, Anastasis means resurrection, since according to the New Testament, Jesus was raised from the dead at this site (*The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Mk. 16:4-6). The tomb where Christ was supposedly buried is enclosed in a small shrine called the Edicule, which is located in the Anastasis Rotunda (Kelley, 2020, p. 76).

The very construction and meaning of the CHS during its early history signified a crucial change in Christian attitudes towards monumental religious structures. Early Christianity had not placed great importance on the earthly Jerusalem or manmade sacred space in general. The early church chose to focus on the spiritual aspects of their faith and reject earthly locations (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 171, 182–183). Those believers, hitherto victims of persecution, felt like they had "no abiding city [or location] here" on earth (Armstrong, 1997, p. 180). Their only sacred space was the New Jerusalem described in the book of Revelation, which was located in heaven (*The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Rev. 21:2). Since Christianity was underground at the time, many early Christians had little sympathy for grand earthly monuments, even ones commemorating the most important miracle of Christianity, Christ's resurrection.

What little Christian pilgrimage existed before the construction of the CHS focused upon sites connected to Jesus's life. One area that Christians frequented was the summit of the Mount of Olives, where Jesus "[had] been taken up...into heaven" according to the New Testament (Armstrong, 1997, p. 171; *The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Acts 1:11). They also liked going to

the Garden of Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley, where Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, and the River Jordan, where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Armstrong, 1997, p. 171; *The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Mk. 1:9, 14). This trend reappeared during the Latin Kingdom when sites connected to Jesus's life became similarly prominent in Christian sacred geography.

After Constantine I legalized Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, the CHS became an *axis mundi* in Christian theology. Now that Christians were free from persecution, they had a stake in this world (Armstrong, 1997, p. 180). Christians began aggressively Christianizing the religious landscape of Jerusalem; they were determined to bring down the heavenly "New Jerusalem" into the worldly Jerusalem by building sacred monuments to honor Christ (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 180–185). Even Eusebius attributed special importance to the site of Jesus's death and resurrection.

The CHS played a key role in the Roman desire to remake Jerusalem in a Christian image. In his writings, Eusebius condemned the earthly Jerusalem of the Temple (otherwise known as Aelia), as a 'guilty city' that rejected and crucified Jesus. He contrasted Aelia with the New Jerusalem, a heavenly city that honored Jesus. Eusebius supported Constantine I building Christian buildings like the CHS, since those buildings symbolized both a "violent uprooting of pagan religion" and the triumph of the New Jerusalem on earth (Armstrong, 1997, p. 185). The structures that represented the New Jerusalem were monuments erected to commemorate various events in the life of Christ. Many of those sites later became part of Christianity's sacred geography and important pilgrimage destinations.

Moreover, the adoption of the structure of the Roman basilica to build the CHS represented a major watershed in Christianity's history: from a marginalized and persecuted faith into one recognized and supported by the Roman emperor. Up to this point, the only Christian religious buildings that existed were private homes used for worship known as *domus ecclesiae* (Dauer, 2006, p. 4). State sponsorship of Christian monumental structures only began after the Edict of Milan (Dauer, 2006, pp. 4–5). Thus, the builders of the CHS had to rely on the architectural style of non-Christian buildings. They rejected the style of a Roman temple since it had pagan associations (*The Romanization of Christianity and the Christianization of Rome: The Early Christian Basilica*, n.d.). Nor did they build the church in the style of the Jewish temple, since Christians like Eusebius viewed the Temple as a manifestation of a wicked, earthly Jerusalem (Veldt, 2007). The CHS was built in the plan of a basilica because basilicas were grand buildings that represented the might and

prestige of Rome (*The Christian Basilica*, n.d.). Before its adoption by Christians, the Roman basilica was primarily used as a “marketplace and judgement hall” (*The Christian Basilica*, n.d.). Other uses of the basilica included “banking and stock brokering stations, offices for public magistrates, contracting and leasing, municipal and legal archives, public business, even a library,” which made basilicas important in even the tiniest cities (*The Christian Basilica*, n.d.). The ubiquity of the basilica also meant that many early Christians would have been familiar with it (*The Christian Basilica*, n.d.). Also, basilicas were not as definitively associated with pagan cults as Roman temples, which made them good alternatives to the latter (*The Romanization of Christianity and the Christianization of Rome: The Early Christian Basilica*, n.d.). Furthermore, the basilica’s expansive halls could accommodate vast congregations in worship services, and as a public building, it represented the authority of the Roman empire, and thus commanded respect from Romans. It is most likely that the basilica design was adopted for the CHS because of its convenient size, and the fact that the design gave the CHS the authority of a Roman public building (*The Romanization of Christianity and the Christianization of Rome: The Early Christian Basilica*, n.d.).

### **3. The Axis Mundi in the City of the Holy Sepulchre**

Initially, to outsiders, the CHS was a symbol of Roman Byzantine power, not an icon of Christianity. The first time the CHS was destroyed was in 614 AD during the Byzantine-Sassanid wars when King Khosrow of the Sassanid Empire broke through his siege of Jerusalem. His army burned many churches, including the CHS (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 213–214). At this stage, the CHS was not yet an icon of Christianity, and the Sassanians did not harbor any visible antipathy towards Christians. Rather, the destruction of the CHS in 614 AD was a casualty of their larger conquest of Jerusalem (Armstrong, 1997, p. 214).

The virulent Christian reaction to the destruction of the CHS signified its centrality to Christian sacred geography in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Many Christians compared their predicament to that of the Jews after the destruction of the First Temple and began to contemplate the “gestures and psalms of their predecessors in the Holy City” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 214). This suggests that the CHS assumed importance in Christianity comparable to that of the Temple in Judaism. Additionally, Christians around this time began conflating Jerusalem and Zion, a sharp contrast from the days of Eusebius, when there was a clear distinction between the earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 215–216). As the CHS’s importance in Christianity increased, Christians

embraced Jerusalem as the city of the Holy Sepulcher (Armstrong, 1997, p. 214). Such perceptions of the Holy City would later inspire Western European Christians to launch a crusade seeking to reclaim the CHS and the city of Jerusalem.

In the years following its epic destruction by the Sassanians, the CHS slowly transformed from the site of a divine event to a structure sacred in and of itself. When the CHS was rebuilt, Christian thinkers elevated the church to the status of *axis mundi*. For example, the Orthodox monk Sophronius, who became the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 633 AD, characterized the CHS as “the ocean stream of eternal light” and the “true river of Lethe;” he described the earthly Jerusalem as “Zion, splendid sun of the world” (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 215–216). Christians revered the very structure of the CHS as akin to the heavenly city of Zion. This was a result of the iconization of the CHS in Christianity, a trend that would eventually transform the church into a Christian rallying cry during the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.

#### **4. The Icon of Christianity in Islamic Jerusalem**

The conquest of Jerusalem in 638 AD by Muslim military leaders drastically transformed the political and religious dynamics of Jerusalem. This strongly impacted the CHS, since it was no longer under absolute Christian control. In 610 AD, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, a merchant of the Quaraysh tribe in Mecca, began preaching a new religion called Islam (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 217–218). It was an Abrahamic religion that revered many Jewish and Christian figures but declared Muhammad as the last true prophet of God (Allah) (*Islam: An Overview*, n.d.). For this reason, Jerusalem held special importance in this new religion. According to Islamic tradition, the prophet Muhammad initially urged his followers to pray towards Jerusalem (Wensinck, 1986, pp. 82–83). Additionally, he was transported miraculously to Jerusalem in a single night (Haleem, 2008, p. 17:1). When Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslim caliph Umar in 638 AD, it evolved into the third most sacred city in Islam. Consequently, the CHS, Christianity’s most sacred church, was in Muslim territory.

From 638 AD on, the CHS became embroiled in Christian tensions with other faiths, eventually culminating in the Crusades. When the Muslim armies conquered Jerusalem, though, they treated the CHS with tolerance. Caliph Umar deemed Christians as *Dhimmi*s (people of the book) (ibn Al-Khattab & Abu-Munshar, 2012). In an apocryphal assurance called Umar’s Assurance, he also promised the Christian-majority Jerusalemites freedom to worship and the safety of their

religious sites, in particular, that of the CHS (ibn Al-Khattab & Abu-Munshar, 2012). According to tradition, Umar was invited to pray within the CHS; however, out of respect, he politely refused and instead prayed outside the church (Al-Tel, 2002). He was concerned that future generations would misinterpret his prayer inside the church (Al-Tel, 2002). He also entrusted its keys to the Muslim Nusseibeh family (Abu Munshar, 2003). The keys were a guarantee of the Holy Sepulcher's safety as long as Islamic rulers controlled the Holy City (Abu Munshar, 2003). Moreover, Umar did not seriously assert Islamic influence on Jerusalem's religious geography, merely marking the spot where he prayed with a small mosque, later known as the first Mosque of Umar (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 230–231). According to one scholar, he also built a small mosque on the Temple Mount, which Muslims revere as the *Haram al-Sharif* (Elad, 1995, pp. 31–32).

Over time, however, the rivalry intensified. The Muslim Dome of the Rock (DOR) and the CHS served as respective proxies for both faith/political groups in their disputes. The DOR, built during the Umayyad Caliphate, was intended to be a successor to Solomon's temple. It was built in a Byzantine style and included a golden dome similar to the CHS's domed roof (Gotein, 1950, pp. 104–108). To affirm the values of Islam, the DOR was decorated with calligraphy asserting that Muhammad was the true prophet of Allah and rejecting the divinity of Jesus (Bloom & Blair, 2009, p. 76). Ultimately, the DOR became a sacred space in Islam and iconic of the Muslim faith. Within Jerusalem proper, intense rivalry developed between the DOR and the CHS.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, however, Christian/Muslim relations had deteriorated to the point that Caliph Al-Hakim destroyed the CHS. The destruction of the church was the culmination of the intensified rivalry between Muslims and Christians for religious authority and legitimacy in Jerusalem. Al-Hakim ordered that “both the Anastasis [rotunda] and the Martyrium of Constantine be razed to the ground” (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 258–259). A demolition team stormed the church complex with pickaxes and hacked it to pieces; the fragments were later salvaged and used to repair the church (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 258–259). One complaint was that Muslims struggled to fund mosques, whereas the Christians had “magnificent churches,” including the Holy Sepulcher (Armstrong, 1997, p. 253). Additionally, the CHS's dome was “nearly as big as [that of] the DOR;” this was seen as an infraction of Islamic law (Armstrong, 1997, p. 253). Such complaints were exacerbated by Shi'i propaganda, which expressed displeasure at the “immense riches of the [CHS]” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 259). This all suggests that in the eyes of Muslims, the CHS evolved into a symbol of Christianity.

The rebuilt CHS, which was finished in 1048 AD, reflected not only Byzantine and Medieval Christian thought but also the influence of Islamic Jerusalem. The contemporary Byzantine Emperor, Constantine IX, was an Eastern Christian; the CHS's design, therefore, reflected Byzantine architectural norms. The Martyrium of Constantine was never rebuilt; the Church's reconstruction focused on the Rotunda, which experienced significantly less damage than the other buildings of the complex (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 262–263). Since the Anastasis Rotunda was now the focal point of worship, Constantine IX added an apse to reflect the structure's new purpose as a church (Kelley, 2020, p. 114). The renovated CHS was modest compared to its original structure; this reflected not just the simplicity of Byzantine churches but also Islamic rules (Al-Khattab, n.d.; Ousterhout, 1989, pp. 70–72). The new Church also had an omphalos—a stone marking the site of Jesus' crucifixion—in the Triportico; according to medieval Christian theology, this was the *axis mundus* or “center of the world” (Ousterhout, 1989, p. 71).

Many of the new church's features also reflected the Muslim presence in Jerusalem. For example, the “niches above the cornice” in the baptistery, and the arches in one of the octagonal chapels above Calvary, were directly inspired by Islamic designs (Ousterhout, 1989, p. 75). That chapel was built by local masons, who had no experience with religious buildings other than mosques (Al-Khattab, n.d.). Some parts of Christendom resented the destruction of the CHS and the fact that it now lay in Muslim territory. Its diminished status was eventually used as a rallying cry to summon Christians into a crusade to reclaim Jerusalem.

## **5. The *Casus Bello*, Symbol of Frankish Rule, and Power Broker**

In the time leading up to the Crusades, the CHS became increasingly used as a proxy in Christian conflicts with Muslims. This was especially apparent in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD when the Church became a bargaining chip during Muslim negotiations with Christian powers. For example, when Bedouin rebels seized Jerusalem in 1024 AD, Fatimid Caliph al-Zahir “made a new treaty with Byzantium, promising that the Christians would be allowed to rebuild” their most sacred church (Armstrong, 1997, pp. 260–261). Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus readily agreed to the terms; this indicates that Christian countries would do anything to either keep the CHS safe or rebuild it, a trend that would eventually precipitate the Crusades. And, when the Seljuk empire captured Byzantium's Asian provinces, Emperor Alexius I used the CHS to encourage Latin Christians to join him in war (Armstrong, 1997, p. 271). The CHS became a *casus bello* summoning

Christians to war against anyone that posed a ‘threat’ to the revered Church. This reflects a key development in Christianity: the CHS was perceived to be the center of Christian thought and the *axis mundus* that everyday Christians revolved around. Essentially, Emperor Alexius I asked Pope Urban II for military aid, warning that the “Holy Sepulcher [would] vanish” if no action was taken to defeat the Seljuks (Armstrong, 1997, p. 271; Comnenus & Robert Payne, 2000). Pope Urban responded by declaring a Crusade to reclaim the CHS and the “Holy Land.” In a speech at Clermont, Pope Urban exhorted his audience to “cleanse the Holy City and the glory of the Sepulcher” (de Nogent, 1997). His speech was wildly successful, and in the First Crusade (1096-1099 AD), 42,000 to 60,000 Christians, rich and poor alike, marched thousands of miles to recapture the most sacred site in Christendom (Asbridge, 2012, p. 42; Tyerman, 2006, pp. 103–106).

The songs, oaths, and royal titles prevalent in the era during and immediately after the First Crusade also show the centrality of the CHS in Christian discourse during this period. For example, the oath that every Crusader took included a vow “to journey and visit the Sepulcher of the Lord in Jerusalem” (Schein, 2005, pp. 65–66). A German song sung in the First Crusade boasted that the soldiers and pilgrims were “[journeying] in [God’s] grace” and that the “power of God” would help them in their armed pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher (Schein, 2005, p. 65). Additionally, references to the CHS were used by Crusader rulers of Jerusalem to justify their authority. Godfrey of Bouillon chose to be called the “Advocate of the Holy Sepulcher” rather than adopt the conventional titles (e.g., King or Emperor) (Schein, 2005, p. 65). Although his successor Baldwin I did take the title of king, he also styled himself the “Defender of the Holy Sepulcher” (Schein, 2005, p. 65). This demonstrates the special place that the CHS held in the hearts of the Frankish crusaders, as the so-called defenders of Christianity’s most sacred site.

After the Crusaders seized Jerusalem, they gradually transformed the CHS into a symbol of their power over the Holy City. On July 15, 1099 AD, after a long and protracted siege, the Crusader armies stormed Jerusalem, resulting in a three-day slaughter of 20,000 of the city’s local inhabitants (Boas, 2001, pp. 12–13; of Tyre, 1986, p. 8.20). After the mass wave of killings was over, the city was left a hollow shell. But it was now in the hands of the Crusaders, who could remake the devastated city to a symbol of their triumph. They began by extravagantly restoring the CHS.

The Crusader CHS was a bold statement of Latin Christian dominance over Jerusalem. Unlike Constantine IX, the Crusaders extensively beautified the CHS (Kelley, 2020, p. 116). They

transformed the CHS into a magnificent Romanesque church, a testament to their Western European heritage (Boas, 2001, pp. 103–105). The entrance façade of the church was given a complete makeover, adorned with “ornate lintels, stonework, and windows” (Boas, 2001, pp. 103–105). After the façade, the Crusaders built a magnificent 5-story campanile (e.g., bell tower) (Al-Khattab, n.d.; Kelley, 2020, p. 116).

The design aesthetics of the CHS, balanced the Crusaders’ Frankish culture with the pragmatic need to accommodate many pilgrims. However, the Crusaders initially did not make any changes to the core structure of the CHS. The reconstruction of the Church did not begin until later into the 12th century AD (Boas, 2001, p. 103). Even 8 years after the First Crusade, Abbot Daniel noted that the rock of Golgotha and Calvary were still located in separate structures; this would change when the church was finally completely renovated in 1149 AD (Kelley, 2020, p. 118; of Kiev, 1895, pp. 10.11-15). The Crusaders built a structure called the Chorus Dominorum (now the Katholikon) and removed Constantine IX’s apse, an action that combined the Chorus and the adjacent Rotunda into a single structure (Kelley, 2020, p. 116). This was a clear emulation of the widely popular pilgrimage churches of Spain, specifically the cathedrals of Tours, Limoges, Toulouse, Santiago, and Conques (Boas, 2001, pp. 103–105). This design was ideal for accommodating many pilgrims, as it featured broad aisle naves, equally broad aisled transepts, an ambulatory with many surrounding chapels, and extra chapels on the walls on the east side of the transept (Boas, 2001, pp. 103–105). Another advantage was that clerics could simultaneously hold multiple church services, as there were many chapels; the ambulatory enabled pilgrims to move freely inside the church without disturbing services (Boas, 2001, pp. 103–105). The Chorus Dominorum was covered by a dome supported by a two-story structure; this joined a once-open courtyard and the Rotunda into a single building (Kelley, 2020, p. 116). By placing the various areas of the CHS under a single roof, the Crusaders transformed it into an impressive structure that rivalled the original church of Constantine I.

Much like with the reconstruction of the CHS under Constantine IX, medieval Christian thought significantly influenced key aspects of the renovated CHS. The omphalos (Golgotha) was incorporated into the CHS with a two-story chapel: the Calvary Chapel above, and the Chapel of Adam on the ground (Kelley, 2020, p. 118). This was done in accordance with the then-popular Christian idea that Jesus was crucified on the spot where Adam had been buried (Biddle, 1999, pp. 93–95). The tomb of Jesus was also adorned with mosaics (Kelley, 2020, p. 118).

Although the Temple Mount had once been an area of scorn for many Christians, its reputation in Christianity recovered during the Crusades. Unlike the Greek Christians, who agreed with Eusebius that the Temple Mount represented the old wicked Jerusalem (Aelia), the Crusaders did not similarly stigmatize the area. Rather, to further Christianize Jerusalem and provide pilgrimage alternatives to the CHS, the Crusaders converted the DOR and al-Aqsa mosque into Christian structures. This was in part because it was more cost-effective to modify existing buildings than to build new ones (Boas, 2001, pp. 90–91). Additionally, they misidentified the DOR as Solomon’s temple and converted it into the *Templum Domini* (Boas, 2001, p. 109). They decorated the walls with Christian images, which included Christ’s Presentation in the Temple (Boas, 2001, p. 110). The Crusaders also replaced the DOR’s golden dome with lead (Boas, 2001, p. 110).

The Crusaders also radically changed al-Aqsa mosque into a symbol of the new Christian city. They converted this mosque into a residence for the King of Jerusalem known as the *Templum Salomonis*, as they mistakenly believed that it was Solomon’s palace (Boas, 2001, p. 91). The Frankish rulers further added an apse, a dividing wall, and expanded its northern porch to transform it into a “new church” (Boas, 2001, p. 91). Later, when the Knights Templar used the *Templum Salomonis* as their headquarters, they built a new addition that contained “cellars, refectories, and storehouses” (Boas, 2001, p. 91). The *Templum Salomonis* essentially became their headquarters in the city of Jerusalem.

Although the CHS had once served as a rallying cry that united diverse Christian groups who had joined the Crusader cause, its recapture eventually caused Christian infighting. The fight to control the CHS provoked tensions between the Franks and the local Eastern Christian groups, who had been the guardians of the CHS before the First Crusade. The Crusaders initially expelled the native Christians from Jerusalem (Armstrong, 1997, p. 276). The first Frankish patriarch of the city, Daimbert, dismissed the local Orthodox clergymen and replaced them with Frankish Catholics (Ridyard, 1999, pp. 81–82). Later, however, Baldwin I realized how underpopulated the city was and decided to ally with the local Christians (Armstrong, 1997, p. 277). Seeing Daimbert’s anti-Orthodox mentality as a threat to the Kingdom’s stability, Baldwin decided to decisively discredit Daimbert. According to tradition, the annual Holy Fire miracle did not happen when the CHS was staffed by Catholic priests (Ridyard, 1999, pp. 81–82). But when Daimbert left the CHS to pray at the *Templum Domini*, the local clergymen went back to the CHS, prayed, and the Holy Fire

allegedly reappeared (Ridyard, 1999, pp. 81–82). Baldwin used this miraculous occurrence as a pretext to argue that the local Christians deserved a more prominent role in Jerusalem and the CHS (Armstrong, 1997, p. 278). Subsequently, when Daimbert fled the city, Baldwin created incentives for the local Christians to return and for other Christians to repopulate the city (Armstrong, 1997, p. 278). He invited the Greek clergymen back to their original places in the Holy Sepulcher and offered refuge to Syrian Christians from modern-day Jordan (Armstrong, 1997, p. 279).

Another example of the CHS being used as a pawn in Crusader Kingdom power struggles can be found in how the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller competed for the highly prestigious responsibility of caring for Jerusalem's pilgrims. The Knights Templar was founded in 1118 /1120 AD to protect pilgrims from bandits (Hayes, 2014, p. 60). Supported by a vast number of influential individuals, such as King Baldwin II of Jerusalem and the Pope, the Templars quickly became key players in the power politics of the Holy Sepulcher (Hayes, 2014, p. 60). They were headquartered in the *Templum Salomonis*, formerly the royal palace of Baldwin II (Hayes, 2014, p. 60). By the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, the military order had at least 7,000 members and 870 properties throughout the Christian world (Hayes, 2014, pp. 60–61). They became one of the richest and most powerful groups in Jerusalem if not Christendom.

The Knights Templar's greatest rival was the Order of the Hospital of St. John, or the Knights Hospitaller. The Hospitallers were established in 1070/1080 AD to care for poor pilgrims (Hayes, 2014, p. 61). Unlike the Knights Templar, which was founded for a violent purpose, the Hospitallers only adopted militancy as an extension of their duty to care for pilgrims (Hayes, 2014, p. 61). However, some scholars assert that the reason behind the change was actually to compete with the Knights Templar for the privileged responsibility of advocating for (defending) the pilgrims that visited the Holy Sepulcher (Hayes, 2014, p. 61). Although the two organizations shared the same stated purpose, they sought to outdo each other in order to attain the reputation of being *the* military religious order, thus consolidating their influence in the city. In this way, almost every aspect of the CHS was involved in the power brokerage of the Crusader Kingdom, even the responsibility of caring for the church's pilgrims. Having a prominent involvement in the CHS conferred great honor, so even likeminded organizations competed for the sole right to protect the Church.

## 6. The Holy Site of Crusader Jerusalem and Hub of Christianity

The centrality of the CHS in Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land reflects how it had become the most sacred *axis mundi* in Christendom by the time of the Crusades. Much like Mecca and Islam, Christians of the Latin Kingdom were determined to visit the church at all costs. In fact, guards had to be posted around the Calvary area in the CHS to prevent pilgrims from being crushed to death (Theoderic, 1994, pp. 143–197, 155). And even if pilgrims could not visit the church in their lifetime, they requested that their cloaks be taken instead to the CHS on their behalf. With the CHS falling under Christian control, the pilgrimage to the Holy City increased dramatically. Travel to the Holy Land was made easier with the advent of a significant naval fleet and religious orders to protect pilgrims during their journey (Mylod, 2013).

As the CHS became increasingly accessible, it began to play a more visible role in Christendom internationally. The capture of Jerusalem by the Crusader armies only increased the Christian world's fascination with the CHS. As more and more pilgrims visited the Holy Sepulcher, they became determined to bring some of the CHS's sacrosanctity back to Europe, through replicas and relics.

Many pilgrims and aspiring pilgrims even built replicas of either the famous church's architectural elements or its iconic elements. For example, CHS-themed monasteries were built on the pilgrim roads of Italy, such as monastery of the Holy Sepulcher at Bobbio or that of Borgo San Sepolcro near Florence (Schein, 2005, p. 63).

Many churches in the West around this time were also inspired by the Rotunda design of the Holy Sepulcher (Schein, 2005, p. 63). The Church of St. Michael in Fulda, built from 820-822 AD, had a replica of the CHS's aedicule (Schein, 2005, pp. 63–64). Additionally, the CHS also served as a model for a church consecrated in 1036 AD at Busdorf outside Paderborn (Schein, 2005, p. 64). At the time, even religious structures that were not replicas of the CHS itself had imitations of artifacts found in the CHS, like the tomb of Christ. The abbey of St. Hubert at Ardennes had a marble monument representing the Sepulcher of Christ "consecrated in 1076 [AD] by Bishop Herman of Metz" (Schein, 2005, p. 64). As a testament to the CHS's reputation in Christendom as a sacred space, such replicas were considered to possess the miraculous qualities attributed to the CHS, such as its healing power (Schein, 2005, p. 64).

Additionally, the True Cross (the cross Jesus was allegedly crucified on) became similarly iconic of Christianity. Much like the CHS, the True Cross was also used by European monarchs as a

bargaining chip (Schein, 2005, p. 83). For example, King Baldwin I of Jerusalem gave King Sigur of Norway a fragment of the True Cross in 1107 AD (Schein, 2005, p. 84). Essentially, possessing fragments of the True Cross legitimized the authority of a monarch, much like how claiming the protection of the CHS legitimized the rule of the Crusader kings of Jerusalem.

## **7. *Imitatio Christi* in the City of the Humanity of Christ**

As Crusaders began to familiarize themselves with Jerusalem, they expanded their interest in the city's sacred geography from merely the site of Jesus' death and resurrection (e.g., the CHS) to diverse sites dedicated to all aspects of Jesus's life. They began to perceive Jerusalem as the place where "[Jesus's] feet had trodden" (*The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Ps. 132:7). The new Crusader oaths and prayers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD emphasized their motivation to travel to "the place where [their] Lord Christ...was born from a Virgin, died, was resurrected and ascended to Heaven" (Pennington, 1974, p. 431). Additionally, the purpose of pilgrimage to Jerusalem shifted from visiting the CHS to *imitatio Christi*, a phenomenon where pilgrims would "[re-enact] in their own lives the sufferings of Christ" (Schein, 2005, p. 67).

Moreover, the Christ that the pilgrims imitated was very different from the Christ that Europe had known before the Crusades. Whereas Christ was once depicted as a triumphant, resurrected Savior, people now emphasized his suffering, humanity, and humility more (Schein, 2005, p. 67). Some pilgrims attempted to experience the humanity of Christ through self-flagellation (Schein, 2005, p. 67). Others, deciding that they had to "deny [themselves], and take up [their] cross daily" in order to truly follow Christ, performed selfless acts during their pilgrimage (Schein, 2005, p. 69; *The NRSV Standard Bible*, 2009, p. Lk. 9:23). A nobleman named Alberic "kissed each of the lepers every day after Mass and carried the feeble among them on his shoulders" (Schein, 2005, p. 68).

As interest in Jerusalem extended to Jesus' life story more generally, the *locus sanctus* of Jerusalem gradually shifted from the CHS to the humanity of Christ. The Crusaders began marking certain areas of the city as locations of important events in the Bible. They renamed the gate on the west side of the *Haram* as the 'Sorrowful Gate', where Jesus was led to Calvary Hill for crucifixion (Schein, 2005, pp. 86–87). To encompass sites all over Jerusalem, the Crusaders created the *Via Dolorosa* (Way of the Cross), allegedly the path that Jesus walked to Golgotha (Schein, 2005, p. 86). The sites on the *Via Dolorosa* eventually became the Stations of the Cross.

Even as the focus of pilgrimage to Jerusalem began to place greater emphasis on imitating Christ's humanity, a countervailing trend occurred in the CHS, which began to move away from being a representation of Christ's death. Starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, the CHS slowly began to be perceived more as a monument to Christ's resurrection than a tomb to the death of Jesus (Schein, 2005, p. 70). This change was even reflected in the name of the CHS. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Latin patriarchs of Jerusalem changed their title to *patriarcha sancti Resurrectionis Christi ecclesie*, which translates as "Patriarch of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ," an obvious reference to the CHS (Schein, 2005, p. 71). This signified that the new name of Christianity's most sacred site (*sancti Resurrectionis Christi ecclesie*) placed greater emphasis on Christ's resurrection than that of its old name (*Ecclesia Sancti Sepulchri; Latin for CHS*) (Schein, 2005, p. 71).

## **8. Conclusion**

The role of the CHS had constantly changed from its construction to the Latin Kingdom. These changes reflect shifts in Christian perception of sacred space. When the CHS was initially constructed in the Constantinian period, it was merely a religious monument commemorating Christianity's most important miracle. At that time, Christianity discouraged 'worldly' sacred spaces. The construction of the church was originally intended to add a Christian monumental presence to Jerusalem. Eventually, during the Heraclian dynasty of the Byzantine Empire, the very structure and ground of the church became sacred and Jerusalem became subsequently revered as the city of the CHS. As Christianity began to embrace sacred space and the concept of *axis mundus*, the first destruction of the CHS gave the church a status in the faith comparable to that of the Jewish Temple in Judaism. When the CHS fell under Muslim rule, it became perceived as a symbol of Christianity itself. Muslims built the DOR in emulation of the CHS. The church's sacrosanctity in Christianity increased significantly once it was isolated from the rest of the Christian world. As religious tensions intensified, the CHS was used as a diplomatic pawn and eventually destroyed. This action, coupled with the church's status as Christianity's sole *axis mundus*, transformed the church into a rallying cry for all Christians. By the time of the First Crusade, the CHS was so central to the Christian faith that it unified and compelled European Christians from all walks of life to travel thousands of miles and wage holy war. After Christians captured Jerusalem, the Crusaders ambitiously expanded the church and beautified it in the Romanesque style to emphasize their control of the city and accommodate the influx of pilgrims. During the Latin Kingdom period, the

CHS's role in Christianity subtly changed, becoming more of a proxy in disputes between the Christian groups within Jerusalem. Additionally, as pilgrims became more familiar with the Church, Jerusalem's importance in Christianity shifted from being the city of the Holy Sepulcher to the city of the humanity of Christ. While Christian theology began to argue for the presence of multiple *axis mundi* on earth, rather than one, the sacred geography of Jerusalem in Christianity was expanded from just the CHS to include *axis mundi* encompassing all aspects of Jesus's life, thereby transforming Jerusalem itself into a Christian *axis mundus*.

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