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[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_peq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_peq_01.php)

- (c) An extensive necropolis of the Roman period at the adjoining mouth of the *Wady Kerazeh*.
- (d) The ruins of a large synagogue of beautiful white limestone, a local marble, every fragment of which had to be transported from a distance. The remains, though fragmentary, clearly show that the building here was, allowing for locality and period, of more than ordinary magnificence, finer than any of the other ruined Galilean synagogues, which were indeed apparently modelled after it.<sup>1</sup>

The existing remains are clearly not all of one period, and the extensive pavement to the east of the Roman synagogue would appear to have been not, as it became later, a mere courtyard, but to have been the foundations and pavement of an earlier synagogue to which, too, many of the more primitive of the surviving carved stones belong.

On the whole of the north shore there is nowhere else any indication of any such building, such as might be reasonably expected in the ruins of Capernaum; nor, indeed, as has been shown, is there any other site which was, apparently, from the evidence of the pottery, occupied during New Testament times. There is, lastly, one question which the supporters of the other view never appear to have satisfactorily answered: if not Capernaum, what Jewish city in the days of Christ could have stood at the site of *Telhâm*?

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## THE "GARDEN TOMB."

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

It is with considerable hesitation that I take in hand the task of writing an article to state my views on the so-called "Garden Tomb," for I shall be compelled to express opinions contrary to those of friends for whom I have a high regard. But, having undertaken the duty, I must speak plainly.

<sup>1</sup> For preliminary account, with a plan and photographs, see *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, No. 29.

Let me say, first, that I hold no brief for the traditional site of Calvary and the Tomb, within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I find it hard to believe that the city wall really formed such a re-entrant angle as is necessary for the authenticity of the church site. And even if so built, such a corner (as everyone who knows oriental cities can easily realize) would rapidly become filled with all manner of offensive rubbish, and would therefore be a most improbable site for the garden of a rich man. A very much stronger chain of record or tradition, than we have any evidence for, must be shown to unite the events of the Crucifixion and entombment with the Empress Helena's expedition, before these objections can be satisfactorily removed. Could a modern investigator expect to find, say, the grave of Samuel Pepys, if it were unmarked by any inscription, and not indicated by any record save that it was somewhere in London?

A preliminary word needs to be said regarding the knoll north of the Damascus Gate, commonly spoken of (in English) as "Gordon's Calvary," "the Green Hill," "the Skull Hill," and like names, though its proper appellation is *El-Edhemîyeh*. The cult of this pseudo-sanctuary is not nearly so objectionable as that of the "Garden Tomb" which is excavated at its foot; but that it is objectionable appears to me for several reasons. In the first place, there is the old argument that there is no evidence whatever that Calvary or Golgotha was a hill at all. It is called a *place* (τόπος) in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is not the faintest indication that this "place" was elevated ground. The growth of the popular conception of a *hill* has been well traced by Sir C. Wilson in his work on *Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre*, and has, no doubt, been spread through the English-speaking world by the well-known hymn about the "green hill far away." This hymn is, no doubt, a charming child's poem; but if historic truth be of any importance in connexion with such matters as this, it should be expunged from our hymn-books.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, if the Crucifixion had taken place *on a hill*, the fact would have been so striking that one of the evangelists would have surely remarked upon it: for it would have been an unusual departure from the ordinary Roman practice, to

<sup>1</sup> With it should go that other hymn beginning "By cool Siloam's shady rill how sweet the lily grows." In the whole vast range of English literature there is probably not to be found another sequence of ten words containing a greater number of inaccuracies.

which we have the direct testimony of Quintilian—*Quotiens, nocivis crucifigimus, celeberrimae eliguntur viae ubi plurimi intueri, plurimi commoveri hoc metu possint. Omnis enim poena non tam ad vindictam pertinet, quam ad exemplum.*<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, much is made of the skull-like appearance of the hill. Now (a) "place of a skull" does not mean "place like a skull." A skull or skulls may have been found there [as at Belaclugga, "the ford-mouth of the skulls," in co. Clare, Ireland], or the word translated "skull" may be a corruption of something entirely different [as in the name of the town of Schull, near Skibbereen, co. Cork]. And (b) though now there is a certain resemblance to a skull in the configuration and appearance of the hill, it does not follow that it had the same resemblance in the time of Our Lord. In fact, the view of Jerusalem, from Sandy's *Travels in the Levant*,<sup>2</sup> seems to show that the quarry-scarp, which has made the two prominent "eye-sockets," had not yet been made when Sandys sketched his drawing, and that the building to which the larger "eye-socket" originally served as a cistern was still in position at the time.

As for Gordon's rock-contour idea, it is obviously not worth a moment's consideration, for it clearly presupposes that those who named the hill had a contoured map before them! So long as we fix on a site outside the walls of Jerusalem, and near a road, there is nothing whatever in the description of the tragedy to contradict a site west, south, or east of the city.

In short, the arguments in favour of the so-called "skull hill," summarized on p. 270 of the *Quarterly Statement* for 1906, may be met as follows:—

(1) "Its elevation and conspicuous position"—the elevation is a serious *objection*; a wayside site would be equally conspicuous.

(2) "Its resemblance to a human skull"—which is later than 1600 A.D., and, in any case, has nothing to do with the name.

(3) "Its proximity to the city and to the great road to the North"—any site whatever within a mile and a half of the city would suit equally well. It is *not near enough* to the roadside. The "North" is a point of no importance.

<sup>1</sup> *Decl. 274 ad. fin.* That there was no exception to this rule made in Christ's case is indicated by Matt. xxvii, 39, 40, "They that passed by reviled him . . . saying (λέγοντες)"—not "calling" or "shouting," as would have been necessary had the cross been erected on a hill over which ran no path.

<sup>2</sup> *A Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610.* Third ed. 1627.

(4) "The Jewish tradition which identifies it with the 'Place of Stoning'"—if such a tradition really exists, and is really ancient, it is quite irrelevant. Nowhere is the statement made that the Crucifixion took place in the ordinary site of executions. Joseph's garden would not likely be in the neighbourhood of such a place.

(5) "The tradition relating to the Martyrdom of Stephen"—again perfectly irrelevant.

(6) "The evidence of tombs in the vicinity"—but as there are tombs everywhere round Jerusalem, this is no argument in favour of the suggested site.

Two other arguments are brought forward in Murray's *Guide to Palestine*. The first is that the Jews in passing this hill are in the habit of breathing a curse against Him who destroyed their nation—who invented this statement I know not. The second is that an inscription was found in the neighbourhood commemorating a certain person who was "buried near his Lord"—which is a mistranslation.

The hill might, however, be allowed to continue as a not inconceivable site for the Crucifixion, in the face of all these objections. But nothing whatever can be said in favour of the tomb. Till English Protestantism has rid itself of the incubus with which it has thus burdened itself, not a word dare be spoken against the mediæval ecclesiastics who dealt in "Holy Places." The hard names applied to the sites shown to Arculfus or Felix Fabri can with equal propriety be applied to "Gordon's tomb."

We are told that it is a "Jewish Tomb." If that means a tomb of the sort common between 150 B.C. and 100 A.D., then it is nothing of the kind. It is a pity that so much is claimed for it; the prejudice raised thereby is apt to blind one to the fact that it is a remarkably interesting sepulchre. But it cannot be earlier than 300 A.D. This chronology is indicated by the architecture of the tomb, as compared with others that have been found unroofed and containing dateable objects.

Again, we hear that it is *unfinished*. As a matter of fact it is *over-finished*; it obviously was originally two independent tomb-chambers, which have been united together by breaking the partition between them. But why should Joseph's tomb be supposed to be "unfinished"? It was a *new* tomb, which is something quite different. And it is an importation of modern Western sentiment into the ancient East to assume that Joseph and his family would

not use the tomb for themselves after it had been vacated by the Resurrection.

A good deal is made of a cross with **A—W** painted in two places on the wall. Such a graffito is not uncommon, and implies nothing important. An identical graffito is found in a tomb on the roadside leading to the "Tombs of the Judges."

From the gospel narrative we learn that the tomb of Christ was closed by a rolling stone. This was not (as I have once said before, in a previous paper) a flat millstone-like disc, but a globular boulder *not* fitting into a slot in the entrance: that is, it was *not* such a stone as that of the "Tombs of the Kings" or the "Tomb of Herod," but a stone such as is found in one of the Wady er Rababi tombs. This is required by Matt. xxviii, 2. But "Gordon's tomb" was closed not with a movable stone at all, but with a bolted door; the sockets for the bolts and hinges remain in the jambs. There is no evidence whatever to show that this is any modification of the original plan.

The so-called window, through which we have been asked to picture the disciples looking into the tomb, is really the top of the doorway of the originally independent inner chamber, which has been partially blocked up with masonry. The receptacles for the bodies in the tomb are so deep that it would be impossible to see through this window whether anything had happened inside the sepulchre.

In conversation with tourists at the hotel in Jerusalem I constantly hear such a remark as this: "I came to Jerusalem fully convinced that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was the true site; but I went to the Church and saw all the 'mummery' that goes on there, and I saw the Muhammadan soldiers guarding the place to prevent the Christians fighting. Then I went to that peaceful garden: and then I *knew* that the church was wrong, and that Gordon had found out the real site."<sup>1</sup>

This is the most convincing argument that can be advanced in favour of the tomb, and it is obviously quite unanswerable. But it is hardly so conclusive as to warrant the diversion of large sums of money which might have gone to advance some of the many possible branches of scientific work in Palestine.

<sup>1</sup> It may be mentioned here that, in conversation with Sir Charles Wilson, and after hearing his remarks and objections, General Gordon expressed regret at having committed himself so strongly to this site.—J.D.C.

There are those who do not venture so far as to say that this tomb is the true "Holy Sepulchre," but who say that it is worth while maintaining it "because it shows what the tomb in the garden was like." This is in the spirit of those who treat the "Holy Fire" spectacle as a "beautiful allegory." As a matter of fact, the conception it conveys is erroneous. Joseph's garden was probably a vegetable yard or fruit-orchard, not a modern European *parterre*. And the tomb is too mean to have belonged to a person specially characterized as a "rich man."

The statement that this is the "*only* tomb that answers all the conditions" is not worth discussing. I have endeavoured to show that it answers none of them. And if there were any use in doing so, I think I could point out at least five and twenty tombs round Jerusalem in every respect more suitable.

The true site of the Holy Sepulchre is lost and forgotten, and there is no reason to hope that it will ever be recovered.

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## SOME NEW INSCRIPTIONS FROM JERUSALEM AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

I FORWARD squeezes of a number of inscriptions that have recently come to light in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup>

I. The first is a stone whose inscription has been long known, but it had passed out of sight owing to the demolition of the wall in which it had formerly been built. It has recently been re-discovered in an outbuilding in a garden belonging to the Khaldi family, close to the London Jews Society Hospital. The inscription is fragmentary, the beginnings and ends of the lines being lost. It is correctly given in the Jerusalem volume of the *Memoirs*, but

<sup>1</sup> These are preserved at the Fund's Office, where they may be inspected.—ED.