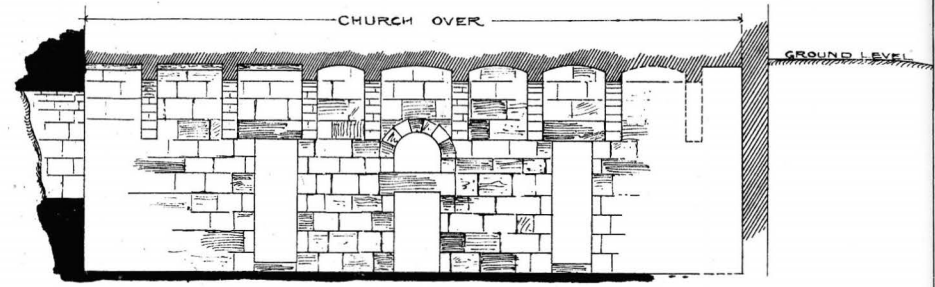
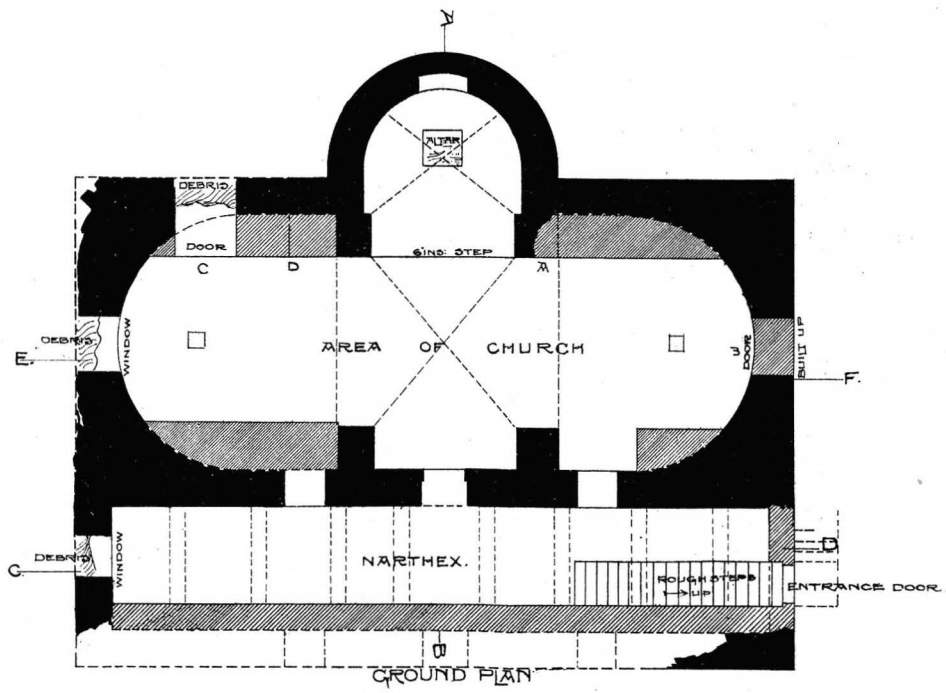


SECTION A.B.

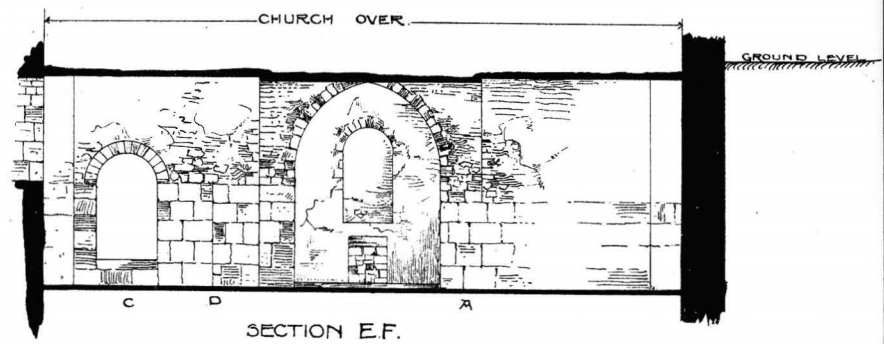
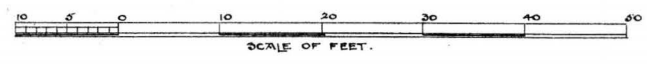


SECTION C.D.



GROUND PLAN

LOWER CHURCH OF ST JOHN
JERUSALEM.



SECTION E.F.

Meas^r & Drawn by
Arch^t: C. Diehl
Jerusalem
April 1897

THE LOWER CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, JERUSALEM.

By ARCHIBALD C. DICKIE, A.R.I.B.A.

THIS curious little Byzantine Church is situated in Christian Street, near the Pool of Hezekiah, and over it is the more modern Church of St. John, built almost on the same plan.

The present ground level is 21 feet above the floor level of the lower Church (*see sections*), and access is obtained by a rude flight of steps, through the door at the south-west angle of the building. These steps are partly blocked and descend to a vaulted narthex, 7 feet 8 inches by 64 feet 6 inches, which originally had been lighted by a window in the east end. One of the three doorways from the narthex has been blocked up, by a later addition to the walls (*see hatched walls on plan*), which has transformed the original Church into a rather irregular chamber, 16 feet 6 inches wide by 62 feet 9 inches long, with segmental ends at north and south, and having a projecting apse to the east with a floor 6 inches above the Church floor. In the centre of this apse stands a stone-built altar, 4 feet 1 inch by 3 feet 5 inches by 3 feet 4 inches high, the altar stone on top being the whole size of the pedestal and 11 inches thick, while the pedestal is formed of rough rubble building.

A careful study of the masonry shows the extent of the later additions to be a thickening of the east and west walls (*see hatched parts on plan*). This lower masonry does not bond into the earlier walls at the ends and piers (except at pier A, where the courses are continuous, *see section E, F*), and although the two kinds of masonry very nearly course together at an average of 21 inches, a closer examination shows in places a distinct variation of bed joint. At the points where the east and west walls butt against the end walls a straight open joint occurs, showing plainly that the circular walls continue behind the joint. By carefully setting out these points and careful measurement of the segmental ends, I found that a continuation of the circle came exactly to the inside line of the west wall at the door openings and in the same way suited the position of the piers of the eastern apse (*see plan*). The dressing of the earlier masonry is comb pick, while that of the later work shows both comb pick and long stroke tooling, as far as I could judge from candle light, on a sometimes rather decayed surface.

The form of the early Church (*see blackened walls on plan*) is peculiar. The main body of the Church runs north and south and is 62 feet 9 inches long by 24 feet 9 inches wide with apsidal ends, and is divided into three bays, the middle one continuing eastwards and terminating in an apse projecting beyond the east wall of the main part. The four piers around the middle bay are not exactly in the angles of a square, but are near enough to admit of a dome over them, of the characteristic Byzantine style. A spacious narthex, 12 feet wide by 64 feet 6 inches long, formed the western termination of the original Church.

Such details as doors and windows are still more or less uncertain. The filled-up doorway at B in south wall shows that a southern entrance, either from the outside or to another compartment, existed at the floor level (see section A, B), and this along with the three western entrances constitute the original scheme of access and exit. From the position of doorway at C in east wall, which seems to lead to a passage, I believe it to belong to the later work.

The window in the north end is the only one now seen, but were it possible to search behind the later masonry, which faces the east wall, there is every probability that the eastern lights would be found. A curious straight joint at D suggests a position for a window between it and the jamb of the later doorway which might be a still later insertion. The absence of a straight joint between the pier, A, and the continuation of its face is difficult to explain, but it is possible that a very ruined state necessitated an almost complete rebuilding of the pier. The recess behind the altar may be taken to show the position of a window, which had been built up at the time of the later restoration. The walls of the apse are covered with plaster so that I was not able to study the bonding of the recess.

It is very unlikely that the inside of the west wall of the narthex is the original structure. Its extraordinary thickness (6 feet 7 inches) seems to suggest that here also a similar thickening to that of the Church walls has taken place. If this is so it is easy to account for the absence of the three western entrances to the narthex, which in this case may be hidden by the later wall—facing, in the same way as the windows in the east wall. The present entrance door is late and has no connection whatever with the early Church, and the steps are also a late insertion. It seems reasonable to assume that the narthex had its three entrances corresponding to the inner doorways, and that at the time of the restoration and building of the upper Church, when the accumulation of *débris* had rendered doors and windows useless, the builders simply built them up when thickening the wall and inserted the present doorway to suit the level of the surrounding ground. I have shown by hatched lines what I suppose to be the later building, and have dotted the early wall with the positions of the doorways, except the south-west angle, which I saw and measured and have shown in solid black.

The whole of the vaulting is late. The centre bay has intersecting vaults, and the end bays have plain pointed tunnel vaults. The ribs in the narthex are irregularly spaced to suit the position of the then existing doorways, and the three bays to the north are vaulted longitudinally, while the others are vaulted transversely.

A glance at the blackened walls on plan, keeping in mind the few hypothetical additions, will show a very complete Church of unusual plan, whose form has been all but lost by a later restoration, effected in the midst of such an accumulation of *débris*, that the builders were forced to relegate the original building to the place of a crypt and strengthen its walls to carry a new structure at a higher level. From

the few details remaining it can well be judged that the design was plain, massive, of good proportions, and of a class of work far ahead of the debased work found in the churches of Eudoxia at St. Stephen's and Siloam. The arrangement of the three apses is happily managed, and the details of doors and windows (especially the south doorway) are simple, effective, and of pleasing proportions, giving a dignity and greatness difficult to conceive in such a tiny structure; and one is left to mourn the ravages of time and discord which have almost entirely effaced such a lovely monument of early Christian Jerusalem.

DISCOVERY OF A SULPHUR SPRING AND BATH ON THE BANK OF THE JABBOK.

By GRAY HILL, Esq.

MY wife and I were at Jerash in April, 1898, and when leaving, the Kaimakam, to whom we had brought a letter of introduction, sent a horseman with us to show us a bath of sulphur water, which he said had been discovered about a year previously.

It is situated on the south bank of the Jabbok, and close to it at a spot about one and a half hours' ride from Jerash, three quarters of a mile from the ford of that stream on the direct route from Jerash to Es-Salt, and 100 yards east of the junction of the stream which flows down from Jerash with the Jabbok.

There is a round excavation or pit, which formed the bath. It is built round with stones, and the roof has evidently fallen in. The water runs into this from the south side, and bubbles up in several places from the bottom. The overflow passes into the stream through a short passage once well channelled with flag-stones, remains of which exist. The water is cold, and tastes like one of the less disagreeable of the Harrogate sulphur springs.

MERE HALL, BIRKENHEAD.

A REMARKABLE CISTERN AND NEWLY DISCOVERED SPRING AT AĪSĀWĪYEH.

By GRAY HILL, Esq.

IN the valley east of the ridge which stretches from the village of Et Tûr on the Mount of Olives to Mount Scopus are numerous old cisterns cut in the rock, which are in many cases disused owing to want of repair, or from being filled with earth carried down to them by the rains. One, north-east of Et Tûr, which belongs to the village of AĪsĀwĪyeh, I