

## GOLGOTHA ON MOUNT ZION.

By the REV. W. F. BIRCH, M.A.

*(Continued from Q.S., p. 76.)*

The traditional site of the Holy Sepulchre, in spite of its collapse, deserves some notice for its many religious associations.

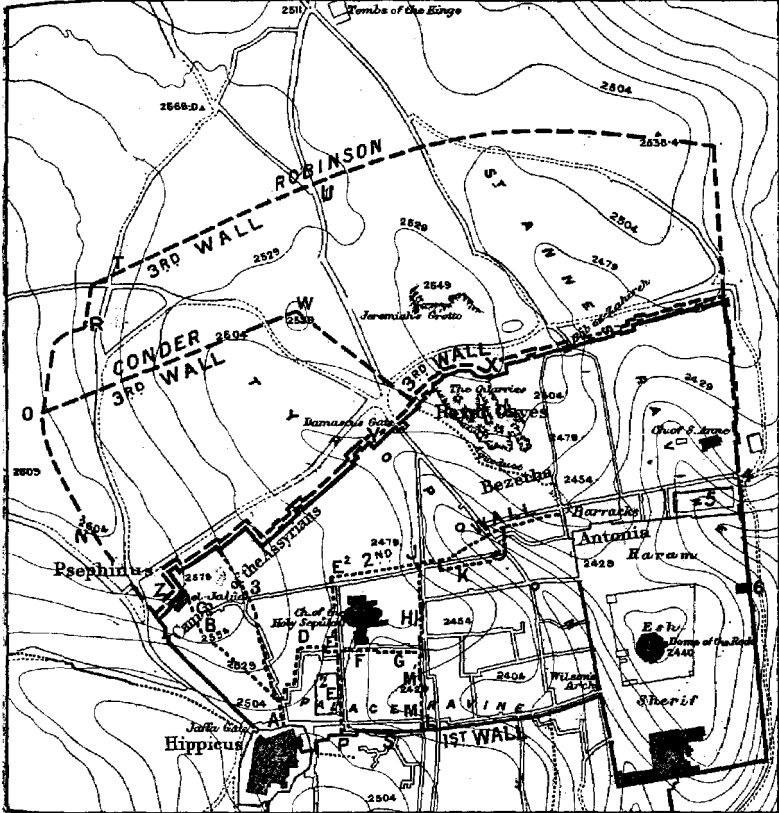
The most illustrious of the Latin Fathers favoured the connection of Golgotha with Zion, when on Psalm ii he grouped together *Calvary*, the title on the Cross, *Rex Judæorum*, and the words, "I am appointed *King* by Him *over Sion*." To a Jew, first, however, it was given to gain a glimpse of this connection.

Although both Nehemiah (*Quarterly Statement*, 1885, p. 102) placed the city of David which is Zion (1 Kings viii, 1) on the southern part of the eastern ridge, and also Josephus, in paraphrasing 1 Macc., thrice substituted *the Temple* for Mount Zion, yet the early Christians united in accepting the S.W. hill as Zion. In thus adopting the wrong one of only two possible hills, they evinced astounding ignorance of Jerusalem topography; while Eusebius, with equal recklessness, gave currency to an anonymous fable that impious men covered up on a *western* position a (cave or) tomb which, according to prophecy (*supra*, p. 75), must have been hewn on the *eastern* hill. In place of this episcopal cock-and-bull story let me give a better (I would even say the real) account, gathered from *Golgotha*, p. 186 *sq.*, since the later fathers throw considerable light on the matter.

Constantine's demand was unreasonable when he ordered Macarius to build a house of prayer on the scene of the Resurrection. As Mount Zion, beautiful for situation, was then befogged, how was a small site like Golgotha to be descried? This Bishop of Jerusalem was, however, a very subtil man. At first he may have been dismayed, but he quickly rose to the emergency. Enormous exertions were made to discover Golgotha, honest no doubt, but still frantic, since incongruous methods were

blended, viz., prayers to win the secret from heaven, tortures to wrest it from the Jews, not to add rewards promised from Helena's stores. At this critical juncture one Judas, a Hebrew from beyond the Euphrates, perhaps looking for redemption in Jerusalem, and

PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.



English 0 500 1000 Scale 2000 3000 Feet.

Plan of the Ancient Walls on the Northern Side of Jerusalem.

well-disposed to the Christians, in reading Isaiah for his comfort, observed in Chapter xxv, 7, that the Resurrection was connected with Mount Zion. Here he espied a providential clue. No Ophelite was at hand to explain Nehemiah and show that (Zion)

the city of David was on the eastern ridge, between Siloam and the Temple. Yet, as a son of a book-worm, Judas either was luckily able at once to lay his hand on a "sketch (of Jerusalem) come to him by paternal inheritance," or, on poring over a first edition of the Wars of Josephus written for his eastern countrymen, stumbled over the *obiter dictum* (*latius creditum*) gloss of that careless historian, that the Upper City (on S.W. hill) was by David named *Mešūdah*, i.e., "fort" (2 Sam. v, 9, "David dwelt in the fort and called it the city of David," which is Zion). Christians could tell him Golgotha was outside Jerusalem; his own Scriptures bade him walk about Zion. He essayed to do so, and then, over against him on the slope of a hill to the north of what he took to be Zion, he detected tempting traces of a Jewish cemetery. Accordingly, on reflection, this shrewd Jew launched the assertion, "Yonder heathen temple covers the site of Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus." His word was readily accepted, and the ground cleared, when, lo and behold! a cave was found and joyfully hailed by Jews and Gentiles as the Tomb. Surely impious men had tried to conceal it! Judas, too, hereby, like Daniel, saved his kin, gained coin; finally he joined the Church, and, having put her under a deep obligation, deserved to be called Saint Kyriacus, discoverer of the Holy Sepulchre. This *Inventio*, wholly erroneous, was hardly a fraud, pious or impious, although a mischievous priest (Jewish) had a hand in it. Had Judas perused Nehemiah, the Holy Sepulchre would doubtless long ago have been located on Bezetha. The approximate position thereon has next to be sought.

*The correct site of Golgotha.*—The search on the eastern ridge may be shortened by turning our back (1) on its southern third, containing many interesting sites, as the Pool of Siloam, and near it the gate (within the enclosure of the two walls) leading to the *underground* passage (Jos., *φάραγγος*) to the king's garden—Zedekiah's way of escape; Hezekiah's rock-cut conduit; intermittent Gihon (Virgin's fountain); above it Joab's gutter; a little below it, in the Kidron, the sheep pool (John v, 2), otherwise called Solomon's (Jos.) and the King's pool (Neh.), covered by a building named Bethesda (the *pool* surely was not a *Beth*); and (2) on its central third embracing the Temple and fortress of Antonia, for these two-thirds of the ridge were enclosed by the outer wall at the time of the Crucifixion. Careful attention must now be concentrated on the open northern third, an eminence once reaching to Jeremiah's

Grotto and containing the sepulchre of King Alexander and the royal caves or quarries in "the Mount," where David hewed (white) "marble stones in abundance" and Solomon's 80,000 masons cut and finished huge blocks of white marble for the Temple.

At 500 feet from Antonia these vast subterranean quarries begin, and continue 500 feet to the present north wall of the city. Thence the open quarrying has produced, as it were, a great ditch, 500 feet wide, reaching to the Skull Hill, or Jeremiah's Grotto.

Even nature had made the eastern hill the most remarkable natural feature at Jerusalem. It alone contained the 40-foot stratum of pure glistening marble (a specimen lies before me), easy to be worked, hardening on exposure, used for the Temple and palaces at Jerusalem.

The present entrance to the underground quarries (*Quarterly Statement*, 1870, p. 373), almost forgotten for centuries, was found in 1852. Thrupp says that in 1523 the excavation was called the Cave of Zekediah, and later, as now, the Cotton Cave. This name is a puzzle. In passing, let me guess it. The above marble (locally known as *Meleki*, i.e., Royal Stone) was hewn by David, and is called in Hebrew *shêsh* (Cant. v, 15) and *shayish* (1 Chr. xxix, 2): the word *shêsh* also means fine white Egyptian cotton or linen. Extreme whiteness, as of a lily, led to both substances receiving the same name. So now Cotton Cave means the White Marble Cave. Let tourists visit it, gather stones, and decide for themselves. Many have walked round Golgotha, I *claim* to have walked under it, and that Golgotha was on the Quarry Hill.

Some champion of the Skull Hill will, like Goliath, challenge me here, and say probably that truth, prophecy and the gospel, all support his claim, since that hill was *near* Jerusalem. It must be admitted that *nigh* (John xix, 20) is indeed a vague term, admitting of any distance up to 600 yards or more. Need therefore drove me to examine carefully the Biblical accounts. It was cheering, then, to note that both St. John says Mary Magdalene, on seeing the stone taken away from the tomb, "*runneth* therefore and cometh to Simon Peter" (R. V.), and also St. Matthew says that matrons bidden by the angel to go *quickly*<sup>1</sup> actually "*ran* (xxviii, 8, R. V.) to bring his disciples word;" even (Mark adds) "*fled* from the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxiv, 20, shows that *ran* is stronger than *hasted*.

tomb." From the tombs (marked "Gordon's" and "Conder's," see figures 2 and 4 on Plan of Ground near "Jeremiah's Grotto") the distance to any gate in the second wall must have been some 600 yards.

Neither Mary nor Salome ought to be impressed into having run three stadia, while one sufficed for a trained Greek. The Skull Hill seems to me much too far from the second wall to have possibly been Golgotha. That even 400 yards is too long a distance I would gladly admit, as less would make the site of Golgotha to be within the present wall of the city, *i.e.*, on the position of the New City or Bezetha of Josephus.

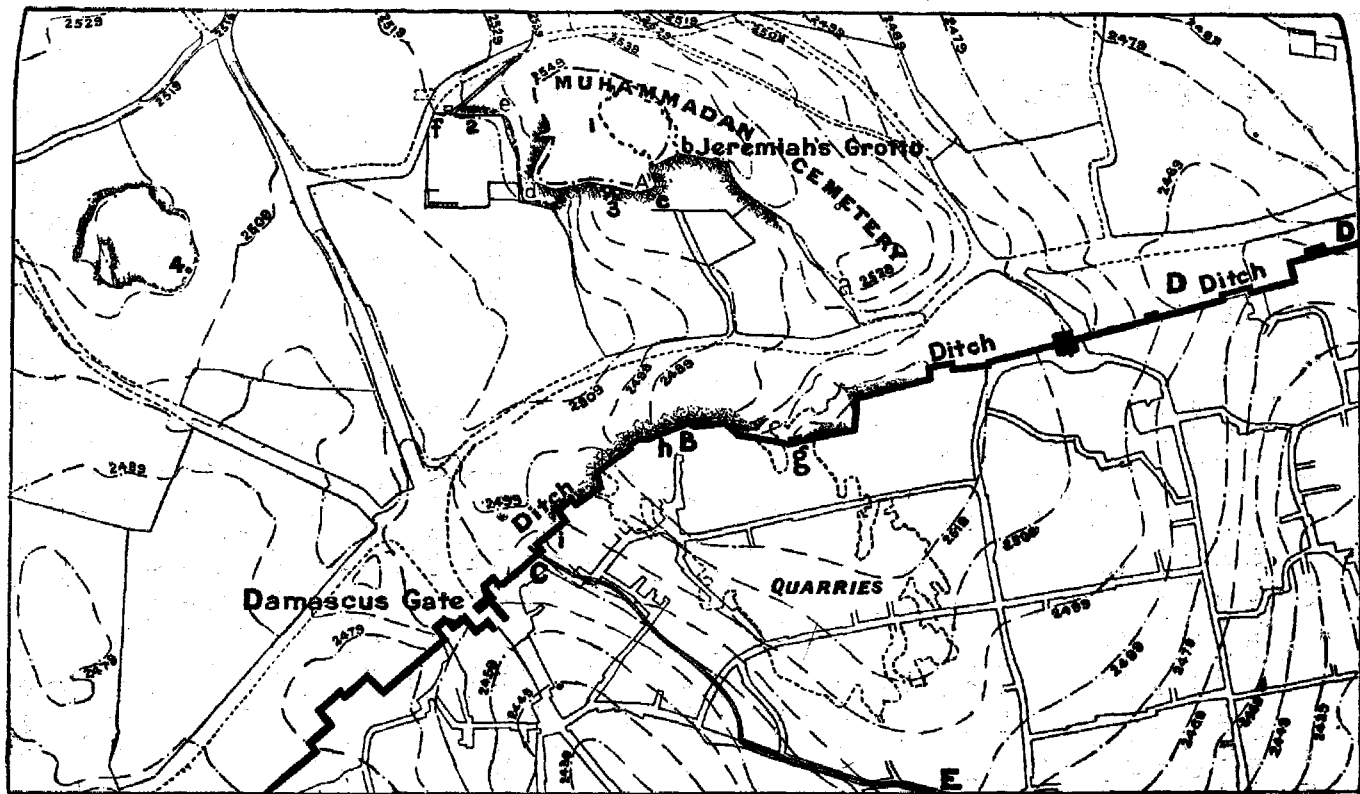
As for Alexander, so for Joseph of Arimathæa, the great layer of *meleki* would be the choicest place for a tomb; and Zion's meek King, who rode on an ass whereon never man sat, and was buried in a *new* tomb, would most appropriately be laid in the choicest marble. Yet one could hardly have anticipated that Nature had so prepared the eastern ridge that it was pre-eminently fitted to be the choicest burial-place for its Lord.

#### *Origin of the name Golgotha.*

As the summit of any hill might be called in Hebrew a head, it used to appear to me that such a summit, if it were round and of white rock, might well be called a skull, so that no further explanation was needed. After reading first Canon McColl's Paper (*Quarterly Statement*, 1901, p. 287) and then "Golgotha," I see that stress must be put on the *first* noun in the term "Place of a Skull." The question then arises, Whose skull?

In reference to Golgotha, the Gospels mention it only in connection with the second man (Christ), while the early Fathers believed that, according to Hebrew tradition, the first man Adam was buried there, so that the skull was taken to be Adam's skull; but the Old Testament, as I hope to show, connects Golgotha (and therefore the Skull) with the great middle-man, Goliath.

As Isaiah connected for us Zion with the Resurrection, so Jeremiah, in the very passage which cleared away the last doubt about the position of Zion, also (I believe) gives us the very name and position of Golgotha, though the reading is mutilated, in the words (xxxix, 39) "compass about unto Goath"—evidently to the west of the hill of Gareb. In *Quarterly Statement*, 1882, p. 58, I



SCALE 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 OF FEET

2. "Gordon's Tomb."

Plan of Ground near "Jeremiah's Grotto."

4. "Conder's Tomb."

placed Gareb east of the Damascus gate, *i.e.*, on the site which now (I believe) was that of Golgotha. Blayney observed on Goatha, "the latter is supposed to be Golgotha, *i.e.*, in Hebrew, the heap of Gotha," or Galgotha. Gareb must lie east of St. Anne's ravine.

To one satisfied that prophecy fixes Golgotha on Mount Zion, and that the New Testament requires the former to be on the site of Bezetha, east of the Damascus gate, and also mindful of Blayney's remark on Golgotha, it is encouraging to find that the LXX for "Goatha" give ἐξ ἐκλεκτῶν λίθων (chosen stones), the very words with which they translate *stones of gēlāl* (גלגל) in Ezra v, 8, *i.e.*, hewn stones, or stones too large to be carried, requiring to be rolled. The Bezetha underground quarry existed, according to Ganneau, between 700 B.C. and 400 B.C., *i.e.*, in the time of Ezra; hence the suspicion arose, and has become to me a conviction, that the correct reading in Jeremiah more or less resembled the three terms Goatha, Golal, Galgotha (Blayney), and referred to the site of the subterranean quarries, while Josephus further speaks of the third wall (obviously here south of the skull hill) as passing *through* or *over* the royal caves, *i.e.*, the Cotton Cave. A settled belief that Golgotha was on the mount (*i.e.*, Bezetha) north of Antonia, makes me desire to show the connection of the three terms with Golgotha, or rather the uncontracted Hebrew word. Here study seems to answer the question, "Whose skull?"

Was it Nicanor's, whose head was hung up near Jerusalem? In *Quarterly Statement*, 1901, p. 403, Schick, rightly premising that Golgotha had not to do with Adam's skull, adds: "I suggest that it was Goliath's skull which David brought to Jerusalem and buried close to and outside the city." He, I think, might have continued thus: "Saul raised at Carmel a trophy of his conquest of Amalek. David likewise, after killing Goliath, cut off his head (as he threatened), took it to Jerusalem (his destined capital), exhibited it perhaps to the Jebusites (they would know what he meant), and (to call type to my aid) mindful that in the Mount of the Lord, the Lord had delivered Isaac, carried out his purpose of erecting both a memorial to the Lord (who delivered him out of the hand of the Philistine), and also a trophy of his victory, on the site of Isaac's altar. As at Ai and in the valley of Achor, a great heap of stones (like Galeed) was raised, with the crushed head (Gen. iii, 15) of Goliath below it in a pit or hole. The natural name of the monu-

ment visible from the great north road would be Galgoliath," *i.e.*, Goliath's heap, like Absalom's hand. I therefore conclude:—

- (1) That Golgotha was on the eastern ridge, on Bezetha, within the line of the present wall, and (as type requires) on the site of Isaac's altar.
- (2) That from about 1000 B.C. the memorial heap of stones (and the site) would be called Galgoliath, and known as the place of Goliath's skull.
- (3) That even after the Mount had been quarried by David and Solomon, Jeremiah knew the place by this name.
- (4) That while the tradition about Isaac's sacrifice was partly transferred to Moriah, the connection of Goliath's skull with *Galgoliath* still survived in memory.
- (5) That in after time Goliath was forgotten, but the place of the skull still remembered.
- (6) That at the time of the Crucifixion the Hebrew גל גלית (Galgoliath) had been corrupted into Aram. גלגלתא (shortened to Golgotha), while the place of Golgotha was known, as in the New Testament, as the place of a skull.
- (7) That the common name would be *Yad Golgotha* (Γολγοθῆ τόπος, Mark). This Greek word is used by LXX for *yád* (place, *lit.* hand, trophy, monument) in Deut. xxiii, 13, in reference to the unclean *place* without the camp (Heb. xiii, 13). With both Isaac and Goliath forgotten, and only the skull of some *pammegethístatus* (Jos.) to reckon with, no holy reverence would cling to such a place, esteemed but a dunghill, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, *before* the Crucifixion. Joseph's tomb would be sufficient distance away to escape ceremonial defilement.