

THE CITY OF DAVID.

BY THE REV. W. F. BIRCH.

“Nil tam difficile est, quin quærendo investigari possiet.”—*Ter. H. T.*

So long as knowledge grows from more to more, will thoughtful writers on Jerusalem from time to time change, or at least qualify, their opinions. Mr. Fergusson in 1847 placed Acra west of the Temple, but in 1860 north of it. Surely, until he reverts to his earlier opinion, no one can fairly quote the weight of his name as in favour of the western site, which he has deliberately abandoned for more than twenty years. But if a writer is always to be tied down to what he has once written, and afterwards distinctly repudiated, then I must ask Captain Conder to submit to his own ruling, and to allow me to quote the weight of his own name, in favour of the Ophel site for the City of David, and against his later statements, since in *Quarterly Statement*, 1877, p. 179, he said, “Thus the City of David, in this case, is Ophel.”

Another error into which Captain Conder has fallen may also be corrected, as it bears on the position of Zion, and most readers are weary of arguments *pro* and *con*, and so in accepting theories are guided solely by the names of their respective advocates. In the *Memoirs* (“Jerusalem,” p. 93) he says that “Sion has been supposed by Lewin to be identical with the Upper City of Jerusalem.” Many will learn with surprise that Lewin was a most determined opponent of the common opinion, that the Upper City was the site of Zion, and actually accentuated his aversion to such an identification by dubbing the Upper City *pseudo-Zion*, *i.e.*, the false or spurious Zion. “Afterwards, in ‘Siege of Jerusalem, 1863,’ Lewin holds that the names ‘Zion’ and the ‘City of David’ were originally applied to the *whole* city of Jerusalem; that the latter was subsequently appropriated by popular belief to that portion of Ophel where he supposes ‘David’s palace to have stood.’ Accordingly, throughout his book, he speaks of the south-west quarter of the city as ‘now called Zion,’ thereby intimating that it had no ancient right to this special designation; and yet, inconsistently enough, the name of Sion is given to it in his plan.”

I am obliged to take this extract from “The Psalms of David” (by E. F.), as I cannot myself refer to “The Siege,” since the Fund’s copy has been indefinitely borrowed. Some reader of these pages perhaps will kindly correct me if I misrepresent Lewin’s opinion, who, as it seems to me, never maintained that Zion was identical with the Upper City.

Whoever assails my theory must inevitably catch a Tartar, for the simple reason that the site I advocate is the very one appropriated (as many admit) to Zion in the Book of Nehemiah; and Nehemiah (be it remembered) himself was chief surveyor at Jerusalem and rebuilt its walls, and therefore must have known the position of Zion, the City of David, a thousand times better than either Josephus or any other writer on Jerusalem from his day to this.

As no one seems disposed to accept my challenge and grapple boldly

with my theory, I suppose it is time for me to make a sally and expose the utter hollowness of the arguments alleged in favour of the rival sites for Zion, positions well described (to use Lewin's word) as pseudo-Zions.

Now the key to the whole question of the true site of Zion consists of two simple facts, viz. :

(A) That the Hebrew version always describes the Valley of Hinnom as *ge*-Hinnom, and the Brook Kidron (on the east side of Jerusalem) as *nachal*-Kidron, never once interchanging the two words *ge* and *nachal*.

(B) That in the historical books of the Bible, the City of David is six times called Zion, but never in a single instance Mount Zion, while in the Psalms and Prophets this term is often applied to the Temple. Consistently with this distinction, 1 Maccabees, omitting all mention of Zion simply, speaks of the City of David as one place and *Mount Zion* as another, identifying it with the Temple or sanctuary.

Through disregarding these reasonable distinctions, and taking *ge* to be equivalent to *nachal*, and Zion (the City of David) to be the same as Mount Zion, writers have unconsciously produced such a confusion in Jerusalem topography, that with scores of books bearing on the subject, very few persons are aware of the true site of the City of David.

This remarkable distinction between *ge* and *nachal*, I must add, is no invention of mine devised to prop up my theory. Gesenius long since observed it, Lewin approved of it, Williams "had misgivings" in disregarding it, Thrupp and Captain Conder and others have recognised it; I merely insist on its *rigid* application, confident that it is the key to Jerusalem.

Further, that the City of David is never historically called Mount Zion in the Bible is a point that any Bible reader may verify for himself. Having got possession of this invaluable key, let me now use it without fear against all the pseudo-Zions, and show how untenable and indefensible it makes every one of the various positions held by the opponents of my theory.

First I will take the site west of the Temple originally proposed (though it resembles Lightfoot's) by Sir Charles Warren, since with his opinion on many kindred points I am in the closest agreement.

I. ZION, SOUTH AND NOT WEST OF THE TEMPLE.

In 1871 Sir C. Warren stated in the "Recovery of Jerusalem," that "in the Book of Nehemiah, the City of David, the House of David, and the Sepulchre of David, all appear to be on the south-eastern side of the hill of Ophel, near the Virgin's Fount, and yet such a position for Zion appears at first sight to be out of the question."

Seven years passed over before I perceived that the apparently contrary evidence, which seemed to Sir C. Warren to make the Ophel position for Zion "out of the question," really was in strict agreement with the evidence of Nehemiah. Seven years more have rolled on since that time, yet I regret to have to add that the whole Biblical evidence, which I have from time to time shown to be *consistent*, and to point to but

one conclusion, still appears to him contradictory, and leads him still to place Zion, the City of David, on the western side of the Temple, and not on Ophel on its southern side. When I place Zion on Ophel, he admits "it is the *natural* position to assign to it on reading the Book of Nehemiah, only it does not seem to me to accord with the other accounts."

I am very desirous that Sir C. Warren from an opponent should become an ally of my theory, by being convinced that this *natural position* is also the true position. One important result, I believe, would be that a diligent and (I anticipate) a successful search would soon be made for the sepulchres of David, and of the Kings of Judah, and the discovery of these most interesting and magnificent relics of pre-exilic Jerusalem would, once and for ever, lay the restless ghost of controversy about the position of the City of David, and save me the trouble of demolishing the other pseudo-Zions.

With this object I would point out two things—

- (1) That the weight of Nehemiah's evidence is simply overwhelming.
- (2) That his evidence is really in the strictest accord with all the other accounts except one or two palpably incorrect statements of Josephus.

The Book of Nehemiah (as admitted by Sir C. Warren) places (1) the Sepulchres of David (iii, 16), (2) the House of David (xii, 37), and (3) and (4) the stairs of the City of David (iii, 15 ; xii, 37), between the Pool of Siloah and the Temple, *i.e.*, on Ophel (so-called). It is also to be noted that in harmony with these indications "the House of the Mighty" (or *Gibborim*, the technical name of *David's* body-guard) is further (iii, 16) spoken of as being in this part, *i.e.*, on Ophel.

Here I must ask two questions. In the case of what sacred site does the identification rest upon fuller or better evidence than the Book of Nehemiah gives in the case of the City of David? If these four or five consistent statements in Nehemiah can reasonably be discredited, what identifications can reasonably be believed? Is it not far more probable that Nehemiah's statements are the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that the other sacred writers have been misunderstood by Sir C. Warren, than that the Biblical statements about the City of David are inconsistent and contradictory?

Sir C. Warren ("Temple or Tomb," p. 41) thinks it "probable that from the first the site of the Holy Sepulchre was known among the Christians, and that *it has never been forgotten.*" But is it not much more probable that the Jews, with far less difficulties to contend with, never forgot the site of the Sepulchre of David, and of the City of David? When Sir C. Warren rejects the Ophel site for Zion, it seems to me that he has to suppose that the Jews, in the time of Nehemiah, had actually become misled about the true position of the Tomb and the House and the City of David, although there had been no break whatever in the continuity of their knowledge about these revered localities, for "many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house," were present when "the foundation of this (second

Temple *i.e.*) house was laid before their eyes" (Ezra iii, 12). Is it possible that all these had either forgotten the position of the chief sites in "the city of their fathers' sepulchres," or else agreed to transfer them to wrong positions? Any such ignorance or conspiracy is utterly inconceivable. If it is once admitted that the Book of Nehemiah places the *Tomb* and the *House* and the *City* of David all on Ophel, then, whatever be the consequences, I see no way of escape from a frank admission that these localities were actually on Ophel.

The position, however, held by Sir C. Warren I understand to be this, viz., that strong as is the evidence in Nehemiah in favour of Zion, the City of David, having been on Ophel, nevertheless the evidence requiring Zion to have been elsewhere seems to him still stronger and only to be satisfied by his site. As in the *Athenæum*, 1881, he writes of "The Temple or the Tomb" thus, "I must state emphatically that this book is a very serious attempt to settle the topography of Jerusalem, and one that I have no doubt will be successful," I take that work as setting forth his reasons for placing Zion west of the Temple.

Let me first, however, state certain points on which I agree with this most candid of opponents. He states in his book—

(a) p. 21: "They (the first book of Maccabees) call the sanctuary . . . Mount Zion."

(b) 9: "Zion, . . . the royal sepulchres were also there."

(c) 9, 10: "Zion formed part and was the fortress of Jerusalem. Zion was not synonymous or co-extensive with Jerusalem. We have not a single instance in the historical books of the term Zion, or the City of David, being used for the whole city.

(d) 24, 25: "His (*i.e.*, Josephus') vagueness in speaking of the topography of the past . . . greatly in contrast with the precision throughout the historical books (of the Bible) and 1 Maccabees. . . . It does not appear in any case that he gives any help in the topography" (*i.e.*, of the Jerusalem of the Old Testament).

(e) 13: "There can be little doubt that Zion the stronghold was in Benjamin."

Having thus successfully threaded his way through what have proved great stumbling blocks to many, Sir C. Warren seems to me to have been completely beguiled into a wrong conclusion by three misconceptions: first as to (A) and (B) above, in reference to the distinction between *ge* and *nachal*, and between Zion and Mount Zion; and next, (C), that the Acra of Josephus was west and not south of the Temple.

Unconscious of his first misconception, Sir C. Warren writes ("Temple or Tomb," p. 35) in support of his western site thus: "This position I have assigned to Zion is the only one which allows of accord in the several accounts, and is the only site yet proposed that will render intelligible the passage, 'Now after this, he (Manasseh) built a wall without the City of David, on the west side of Gihon in the valley' (2 Chron. xxxiii, 14)." One has only to point out that the word here rendered *valley* is in the Hebrew version *nachal*, and at once it will be apparent that this passage,

instead of supporting Sir C. Warren's theory, is directly opposed to it, and confirms the evidence of Nehemiah. For a wall in the *nachal* or Kidron Valley, which is on the east side of Jerusalem, could not possibly be on the *west* side of Jerusalem. While, further, as Gihon literally means a *spring*, and not a pool, and as the only spring in the Kidron Valley is the Virgin's Fount, a lower wall on the east side of Ophel just west of that Fount (as required by this passage) would exactly suit the indications of Nehemiah which place the City of David on Ophel.

Even if some sophist could succeed in persuading one that *nachal* does not always in regard to Jerusalem mean the Kidron, still it might fairly be urged that it was needless to make the Bible contradictory, by applying to the valley running westwards from the Temple a term which undoubtedly often refers to the Kidron, especially when the usual application would leave Nehemiah and 2 Chronicles in perfect accord. So again, in like manner, 2 Chron. xxxii, 30, may be as well explained by the Ophel site for the City of David as by one west of the Temple, while it is probable that if Gihon means (as it must) the Virgin's Fount in xxxiii, 14, it also means the same spring in xxxii, 30.

One mistake often leads to and confirms another. Unaware that the *nachal* (Kidron) could not be the *ge* (Hinnom), Sir C. Warren drew the boundary between Judah and Benjamin which "went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom" (Josh. xv, 8) from "the Virgin's Fount, up the (Valley of Hinnom) Kedron, until nearly opposite the south-east angle of the Noble Sanctuary, where it crossed over the hill of Moriah at the southern side of the Temple, and thence up the Tyropœon Valley to the Jaffa Gate" ("Jerusalem Rec.," p. 307). As this line quite excluded the Ophel site from Benjamin (see (e) above), Sir C. Warren appears to think it unnecessary to discuss the Ophel site in "The Temple or the Tomb," and accordingly he does not make any allusion to the evidence of Nehemiah, even while he takes the trouble of saying (p. 24), "Akra (*i.e.*, Zion) could not have been south of the upper city as here fixed, and if further to the north than Et-Takiyeh, it would have been on the other side of the valley," &c.

Had he only gone on to deal with the Ophel site, I believe Sir Charles Warren and not I would now be its most resolute defender.

Further, unaware of his second misconception, Sir C. Warren writes ("Temple or Tomb," p. 11): "It would hardly be necessary to point out that Mounts Zion and Moriah were distinct hills, were it not that of late years they have been pronounced by some writers to be identical. In the first place, for many years after King David captured Jerusalem, Zion was a royal city, while Moriah must have been beyond Jerusalem, and was the private property of a sheikh or chieftain of the Jebusites. Then, again, David had to go up to Mount Moriah, which he could not have done had the two been identical; then we have the grand ceremony of bringing up the ark of God *out of the City of David, which is Zion*, up to Mount Moriah."

Here misconception as to (B), or involuntary confusion between *Zion*

and Mount Zion, makes a mountain of difficulty where everything is really smooth and plain. Only let it be borne in mind that Zion was the City of David, and that Mount Zion (the higher part of the ridge north of Zion) was the site of the Temple—*i.e.*, Mount Moriah—and these three points turn out to be genuine supporters of my theory.

David lived in Zion, the City of David, while Mount Moriah was outside it. Therefore he could go up and the ark could be brought up "out of the City of David which is Zion" to Mount Moriah (*alias* Mount Zion).

I have thus shown that the Biblical passages claimed by Sir C. Warren as requiring another site for Zion than that marked out in Nehemiah, are really in the strictest harmony with the evidence of that book. Instead of there being any "difficulty or discrepancy" about the Biblical statements, there is nothing but perfect concord among them, as to the position of the City of David.

After this it would only be so much the worse for the credit of Josephus if the third misconception (C) that I have attributed to Sir C. Warren could be shown to be no misconception on his part. For what value, in opposition to the Bible, would belong to the opinion of a "vague" writer like Josephus, who "does not appear in any case to give any help" in the topography of pre-exilic Jerusalem, but has rather made of it a Gordian knot by a few rash conjectures and inaccurate statements of his own devising? Bare justice, however, to the Jewish historian demands that I should point out that he nevertheless places his Acra *south* of the Temple, so that he also is thereby a witness in favour of the Ophel site for Zion, inasmuch as he makes his Acra correspond with the fortress or Acra of the Maccabees, and this (1 Macc. i, 33) was identical with the City of David. (See Acra south of the Temple.)

One or two other points still remain to be noticed. It is said ("Temple or Tomb," p. 12) that "in no single instance in the historical books is this (that it was a holy place) said of Zion after the building of the Temple." This, however, from 2 Chron. viii, 11, seems hardly to be correct, and curiously enough this verse is quoted on p. 6. Yet after the ark had been taken out of Zion, the City of David, one does not expect to read historically anything implying that it was still there.

Sir C. Warren admits ("Temple or Tomb," p. 18) that no argument as to the position of Zion, the City of David, can be derived from the poetical books, yet afterwards he points out that Psalm xlviii may be an exception, and "if so we have direct proof that Zion, the City of David, stood on the north side of the city."

Obviously he refers to the words, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." But, unhappily for his theory, even here it is *Mount Zion* (or the Temple), and not Zion the City of David, that is said to be towards the north. In *Quarterly Statement*, 1883, p. 154 (see also 1878, p. 183), I have pointed out that the Rabbis (though misunderstood by Lightfoot and Fergusson) in several passages place *Mount Zion* (*i.e.*, the Temple) on the

north side of the city (*i.e.*, of David), or Zion. Therefore Zion was south of the Temple.

Lastly, if Sir C. Warren should urge ("Temple or Tomb," p. 21) that the foreign soldiers *descended* from the Acra (*i.e.*, the City of David) to molest the Jews, and that they could not have *descended* from the Ophel site, then the answer is that it is either he himself or Josephus who makes them to *descend*, since 1 Maccabees, the reliable authority for these times (which Josephus was not), speaks rather of a going up from the Acra to the Temple (1 Macc. vii, 33).

As, therefore, (1) Sir C. Warren admits that Nehemiah in four particulars places the City of David on Ophel, and (2) as it has been shown that 2 Chron. xxxiii, 14, instead of requiring his western site, makes it impossible, and that there was no difficulty in going from Zion, the City of David, to Mount Zion, the site of the Temple, and that according to Psalm xlviii and the Rabbis, Mount Zion, or the Temple, was on the north side of (Zion) the City of David; for it is admitted that 1 Maccabees gives the name of Mount Zion to the Temple, and identifies the City of David with its Acra; and (3) as this Acra is identified by Josephus with his Acra, which he has been shown to place south of the Temple, I now invite Sir C. Warren either to find some fresh defence for his pseudo-Zion or to abandon it entirely and occupy what he has all along admitted is Nehemiah's site, *viz.*, that on Ophel so-called.

I await with keen pleasure Sir C. Warren's attention to these remarks, hoping that he will (if he can) overthrow my conceit or else become the latest and ablest advocate of the Ophel site for Zion. To his memorable excavations at Jerusalem I am deeply indebted for my interest in the Holy City. If his works have enabled me, as a dwarf on a giant's shoulders, on the one solitary point of the true site of Zion, to see at present somewhat further than he has done, I cheerfully own my obligation to such an instructor.

Most gladly, too, shall I turn chameleon and change from a hasty critic to a patient spectator, whenever an outburst of enthusiasm for discovering the hidden catacombs of David sends forth a treasure-laden band of explorers to resume his too long suspended work of discovery. In this case whom would the men of Silwân ("Jerusalem Rec.," p. 243) more eagerly hail in their native tongue as a guide through the labyrinthine sepulchres of Ophel, than the well-known *Monitor Niloticus* (*Quarterly Statement*, 1871, p. 86) of the Philistian plain?

Meanwhile, if any one (in the absence of our *gubborim* in Africa) thinks that I go in for assertion rather than for argument, let him not fail at once ruthlessly (and if he likes anonymously) to expose the fallacies of my fancied reasoning.

Perish my theory if it be false; but if it is true, then the very next thing is to search for the sepulchres of David, so that some fortunate explorer may telegraph to Mr. Besant almost in the very words of Cæsar, "Veni, vidi, vici."

W. F. BIRCH.

P.S.—I see that at the Carlisle Church Congress, Canon Tristram practically accepted my challenge and attacked the Ophel site for Zion in the following words:—

“Still less does it seem to me possible to conceive that the City of David, the fortress, was on Ophel, dominated by the higher rock of Moriah behind, and with the commanding brow of the modern City of David to the west. To any one acquainted with the strategic sites of ancient fortresses, the hypothesis is simply impossible. What becomes of the wall of Ophel excavated by Sir C. Warren, and which is referred to in Kings and Chronicles as the work of Manasseh? And again, there is no question as to the Jerusalem of the period of the return. We read the minute details of Nehemiah, and no ingenuity can square his description of the circuit with the suggested position of the City of David.”

Now it is remarkable that not men of war, like Sir C. Warren and Captain Conder, but Canon Tristram, like myself, a man of peace, should be the first to urge that, from a military point of view, it is impossible that the City of David, a fortress, ever stood on Ophel.

In “Jerusalem Recovered,” Sir C. Warren observes that there is a rocky knoll on the Ophel ridge higher than the ground immediately north of it. This knoll he marks at 2,290 feet (p. 298). If the ancient fortress of the Jebusites reached northward as far as this knoll, and was fortified here by a wall 50 feet high, then according to his plan of the rock levels it would not be dominated by any point on the Moriah ridge, or on the western hill (the modern Zion), within a distance of 400 feet. But at that distance, against *walls* built of *mezzeh*, what would even Arish's bow have availed, though it was reputed to have carried between 400 and 500 miles?

If in the age of the twelve spies, the cities of Canaan were “walled up to heaven,” why might not the castle of Zion, 400 years after, be fortified in its weakest point by a wall 50 feet high? And how then, I would ask, does Canon Tristram propose with a sling and a stone, or even with a long bow, in the absence of catapults, to capture a fortress not dominated within a range of 400 feet? Secondly, as the Ophel wall discovered by Sir C. Warren is at least 200 feet north of the knoll (the assumed northern point of the City of David), the date of its construction has nothing to do with David's Zion.

Thirdly, “the minute details of Nehemiah” place (and are admitted by Sir C. Warren to appear to place) the City of David solely on Ophel. I am glad to see every form of objection urged against Ophel (so called) being the site of the City of David, since, as the febleness of each objection is exposed, it will gradually dawn on one and another opponent that Nehemiah's site is both true and reasonable. One unique and invaluable advantage that this site possessed I may here name in passing, viz., that by means of a secret passage (Sir C. Warren's shaft, or the “Gutter,” 2 Sam. v, 8) the defenders of Zion had at their service an inexhaustible supply of water from the Virgin's Fount.

If now the opponents of the eastern hill once more fall back from

arguments on *names* they will be worse off than ever, since General Gordon ("Reflections in Palestine," p. 14) observed, "The Hebrew 'zion' is always the eastern hill." It will take a few bushels of names to outweigh that of the noble hero of Khartoum.

NOTES BY THE REV. G. H. TOMKINS.

I.

SUGGESTED IDENTIFICATION OF BERTHAH OR BERTHAL.

THIS place, so important on the northern frontier of Palestine, has never yet been fixed. The name B-rôthah, בִּרְוֹתָהּ, is only given by Ezekiel (xlvi, 16) in setting out the boundaries of the tribes. I do not doubt that it is the B-rôthai, or B-rôthi, בִּרְוֹתִי, or בִּרְוֹתִי, of 2 Sam. viii, 8, a city of Hadadezer, King of Zobah, taken from him by David. I hope to show that this place may now be identified in a very interesting way, both by its name and by its probable position, and I will take the matter as it came to me, only premising that if I am wrong in separate points still my main position may hold good.

In the Karnak List of Northern Syrian towns made tributary by Thothmes III (Mariette, "Karnak," pl. 19, 20, 21) occurs Bur-su (141). In "Proc. Soc. Bib. Arch.," Jan. 9th, 1883, I made a guess at its being possibly the Bisuru of Assurnazirpal (now Tell Basher), but this did not satisfy me, and it occurred to my mind that the explanation might be found in the Semitic word for cypress, or perhaps pine-tree, viz., Assy. *burâshu*; Heb. *b-rôsh*, בְּרוֹשׁ; Aram. *b-rôth*, בִּרְוֹת; Arab. (says Kitto) *burasi* and *burati*; Syr. vers. *berutha*; Chald. *berath*.

Now the *Bursu* of Thothmes is very close to the Assyrian *burâshu*, allowing for the Syrian *s* instead of *sh*, which the Rutennu, lords of the land in the time of Thothmes, would use. *Burasu* and the Egyptian transcript *Bur-su* are one word, and this led me to the country of coniferous trees, and to the name B-rothah in the Bible.

It has been supposed that the B-rôthah of Ezekiel is Beirût, but I think this quite inadmissible from the situation of Beirût, and also from the name, which seems much more likely to be Heb. בְּאֲרוֹת, wells; and here I think Egyptian records will help us. For we have a Beerôth in the Palestine List of Karnak, No. 19, *Bartu*, so recognised both by Mariette and by Maspero (Zt., 1881, p. 123). And again, we have Beirût in the Mohar's travels, *Bartha* (Brugsch, "Geog. Inschr.," vol. ii, 42; Pierret, "Voc.," pp. 124, 126). And these names differ from *Bur-su* as Beeroth, בְּאֲרוֹת, from B-rôsh or Burâsu, Berutha in the Syriac, and B-rôthah in Ezekiel, and B-rôthi in 2 Sam. viii, 8, which might well be near Riblah, but could not be Beirût, a place of the Phœnicians who were friends and close allies of David.