Underground Empire: Charles Warren, William Simpson, and the Archeological Exploration of Palestine

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Abstract British army officer Charles Warren's archeological excavations in Jerusalem in the late 1860s on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund and Scottish artist William Simpson's paintings of those activities articulated a new kind of imperial space: the underground empire. The imperial underground was a place that had not yet been conquered and where the British had limited visibility. In contrast to picturesque and panoramic views that created an illusion of order and omniscience, Simpson's sketches depict an imperial presence that was confined, constrained, and in danger of collapse. Yet as the British began to probe this subterranean frontier, they turned the underground world into a place not just of darkness and danger but of exploration and excitement. In the process, Warren's work and Simpson's portrayal of it helped lay the foundation for Britain's eventual conquest of Palestine during the First World War by burrowing beneath Jerusalem's dilapidated Ottoman present in search of its ancient and Judeo-Christian past. Jerusalem was not the only node in Britain's nascent underground empire—British work there occurred alongside the construction of sewers and railway tunnels in London and the mining of gold and diamonds in Australia and South Africa—but it was in Jerusalem that an imperial underground was first and most fully articulated, a space that embodied both the precariousness and the potential of Britain's embryonic efforts to establish a presence in the Middle East.

In 1869, Scottish artist William Simpson, already famous for his Crimean War drawings, accompanied the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII) to Egypt for the opening of the Suez Canal. After finishing his work there, Simpson traveled to Jerusalem, where Lieutenant Charles Warren of the Royal Engineers was conducting archeological excavations on behalf of the recently established Palestine Exploration Fund, looking for evidence of Solomon's temple and Jesus's tomb. Warren was sending written reports back to London but did not have any visual material to include with them, so Simpson offered to make some sketches of

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Warren's work to help promote his endeavors. Simpson had already produced several illustrations for a book about Jerusalem but had never visited the city.[1]

Over the course of two weeks, Warren guided Simpson through the subterranean labyrinths beneath the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif and around the ruins of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Together they scrambled through tunnels that Warren and his men had dug and caverns they had excavated, burning magnesium wire so that Simpson could draw in the darkness. After Simpson returned to London, several of his pictures were engraved for the *Illustrated London News* (figure 1), but Simpson recognized that he had more than enough material for an exhibition, which opened at the Pall Mall Gallery in 1872, titled *Underground Jerusalem*.[2] The *Times* lavished praise on the "new" and "unique" nature of the material, which it said was of "unfailing interest" historically, archeologically, and artistically.[3]

Simpson's Jerusalem drawings present a radically new view of Britain's nascent empire in the Middle East: the view from underground. They differ dramatically from the work of his predecessors such as David Roberts, whose picturesque canvases of the Holy Land employed a panoramic approach to the landscape and a monumental approach to buildings and ruins to create an illusion of omniscience and control.[4] In contrast, Simpson's Jerusalem paintings emphasize interiority. They depict narrow passageways with low ceilings and obstructed views and feature bold hues and dark shadows rather than the soft golden sheen more commonly used in paintings of the East. Simpson's empire is cramped and confined, with none of the expansiveness characteristic of the picturesque. While most imperial art depicts an empire that is already possessed, at least visually if not administratively or militarily, Simpson portrays a region of the empire in the process of being uncovered. Whereas most imperial art erases the darkness, Simpson's drawings embrace it.

It has become a scholarly truism to argue that imperial art reflected and served strategic purposes.[5] From the earliest images of the Americas in the sixteenth century through the advertising campaigns of the Empire Marketing Board in the 1920s and 1930s, imperial art asserted European superiority by erasing and exoticizing Indigenous people and by transforming ostensibly unsettled and uncultivated lands

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[1] George Eyre-Todd, ed., *The Autobiography of William Simpson* (London, 1903), 209; George Sandie, *Horeb and Jerusalem* (Edinburgh, 1864), xii.

[2] William Simpson, *Underground Jerusalem. Descriptive Catalogue* [. . .] *of Water-Color Drawings* (London, 1862).

[3] "Underground Jerusalem," *Times* (London), 15 April 1872. See also *Art Journal*, 1 May 1872, 147. Unless otherwise noted, all newspapers referenced are published in London.

[4] Uzi Baram, "Images of the Holy Land: The David Roberts Paintings as Artifacts of 1830s Palestine," *Historical Archaeology* 41, no. 1 (2007): 106–17; J. Harris Proctor, "David Roberts and the Ideology of Imperialism," *Muslim World* 88, no. 1 (1998): 47–66; Mildred Archer, *Visions of India: Sketchbooks of William Simpson, 1859–62* (London, 1986).

[5] Jeffrey Auerbach, "Art and Empire," in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, *Historiography*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford, 1999), 571–83; Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham, eds., *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester, 2007); John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture, 1745–1820* (New Haven, 2011); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 1992); James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago, 1997); Alison Smith, David Blaney Brown, and Carol Jacobi, eds., *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* (London, 2014); Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 1985); Beth Fawkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham, 1999).

THE   EXPLORATIONS   AT   JERUSALEM.

GALLERY AT THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF HARAM WALL.

GALLERY AT THE GOLDEN GATE: COLUMN AND ROUGH WALL.

ROCK-CUT TUNNEL NEAR THE FOUNTAIN OF THE VIRGIN.

VOUSSOIR OF ROBINSON'S ARCH FALLEN THROUGH THE ARCH OF TUNNEL BELOW.

Figure 1—"The Explorations at Jerusalem," unattributed engravings based on drawings by William Simpson, *Illustrated London News*, no. 54 (24 April 1869): 425. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino.

into fertile fields ripe for colonization and exploitation. During the nineteenth century especially, Orientalist and picturesque art constructed a binary opposition between East and West, emphasizing ancient ruins and traditional practices and employing a "monarch-of-all-I-survey" perspective to expunge colonial indigeneity and assert European hegemony.[6] Imperial art, in short, was an exercise of power.

Surveying and mapping, too, were integral to the establishment and maintenance of empire and often served as instruments of imperial control.[7] "The mapping of Palestine," Nadia Abu El-Haj has written, "formed part of an imperial project to 'know' the world, to conquer it physically and intellectually, and to record it in Western forms of knowledge."[8] Many nineteenth-century maps and high-elevation drawings of Palestine combined contemporary geography with biblical interpolations, merging past and present in the interest of creating a Christian Restorationist future under an English aegis.[9] The first British land survey of Palestine was undertaken in 1840–41 by a corps of army officers who were part of a European task force attempting to end Egyptian rule in the region and reinstate the Ottoman regime.[10] The most extensive and scientific survey took place in the 1870s when a team of engineers under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, with support from the Intelligence Department of the War Office, fanned out across Palestine to survey lands both east and west of the Jordan River. According to historian John James Moscrop, the undertaking "came of an idealistic imperial religious wish to possess the land for the British Empire."[11] During the latter stages, the survey was led by a young Horatio Kitchener, who would go on to achieve imperial fame (and infamy) for winning the Battle of Omdurman and securing British control of the Sudan in 1898, and for his scorched-earth policy in South Africa during the Second Boer War. He would subsequently serve as commander in chief of the British Army in India and consul general of Egypt during the years before the First World War.

[6] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 201; Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* 71, no. 5 (1983): 118–31; Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges* (London, 2000); Jeffrey Auerbach, "The Picturesque and the Homogenization of the British Empire," *British Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (2004): 47–54; Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in India* (New Haven, 2013); David Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart, 2004); Nicholas Tromans, *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting* (London, 2008).

[7] Daniel Foliard, *Dislocating the Orient: British Maps and the Making of the Middle East, 1854–1921* (Chicago, 2017); Haim Goren, "Sacred, but Not Surveyed: Nineteenth-Century Surveys of Palestine," *Imago Mundi* 54, no. 1 (2002): 87–110; Haim Goren, *Dead Sea Level: Science, Exploration and Imperial Interests in the Near East* (London, 2011). See also Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago, 1997).

[8] Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago, 2008), 24–25.

[9] Michael Talbot, Anne Caldwell, and Chloe Emmott, "Perceiving Palestine: British Visions of the Holy Land," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 82 (2020): 50–76; Michelle Tusan, *Smyrna's Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide, and the Birth of the Middle East* (Berkeley, 2012), 40–75.

[10] Yolande Jones, "British Military Surveys of Palestine and Syria, 1840–1841," *Cartographic Journal* 10, no. 1 (1973): 29–41. According to Archibald Day, *The Admiralty Hydrographic Service, 1795–1919* (London, 1967), "surveys were undertaken in the interests of defense and trade as well as science" (61).

[11] John James Moscrop, *Measuring Jerusalem: The Palestine Exploration Fund and British Interests in the Holy Land* (London, 2000), 123. See also Goren, *Dead Sea Level*, xviii.

Archeology was also part of the imperial project. According to Margarita Diaz-Andreu, "As in any other region of the British informal empire, archeology [in Palestine] represented one more tool of imperial domination."[12] The most famous nineteenth-century archeological discoveries were not in Palestine, however, but in nearby Mesopotamia, where Austen Henry Layard's excavations of the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh produced crates of treasure for the British Museum and captured the public imagination.[13] Layard's labors, Shawn Malley has written, illuminate "the close partnering of archeology and informal imperialism . . . [and] corroborate . . . archeology's hidden imperialist objectives of mapping, cataloguing, claiming, and policing territory."[14] British archeology in Palestine, although of great historical importance, suffered by comparison because it did not lead to the discovery of high-profile artifacts that could be put on display, such as the magnificent Assyrian winged lions.[15] In part for this reason, there have been relatively few studies of nineteenth-century archeology in Palestine, especially compared to the Mandate period which is generally regarded as the formative golden age of archaeology in the region.[16] The nineteenth-century archeological exploration of Palestine may also have received less attention—both at the time and since—because, unlike Layard's work in Assyria or Giovanni Belzoni's efforts to uncover the Sphinx in Egypt, which primarily involved clearing sand, the investigation of ancient Jerusalem took place mostly underground and out of sight.

The underground is a unique kind of space: dark, dense, and, until the nineteenth century, largely hidden.[17] But with the emergence of geology and paleontology as fields of scientific inquiry, along with the massive expansion of coal mining that accompanied the Industrial Revolution, a new interest in the underground began to materialize, expressed most famously in Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)—

[12] Margarita Diaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (Oxford, 2008), 135. See also Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845–1854* (Farnham, 2012); Katharina Galor, *Finding Jerusalem: Archaeology between Science and Ideology* (Berkeley, 2017); Dilip K. Chakrabarti, "The Development of Archaeology in the Indian Subcontinent," *World Archaeology* 13, no. 3 (1982): 326–44. More broadly, see Lynn Meskell, "Archaeology Matters," in *Archaeology under Fire: Nationalism, Politics, and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London, 1998), 1–12. For a more contemporary analysis, see Susan Pollock and Catherine Lutz, "Archaeology Deployed for the Gulf War," *Critique of Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (1994): 263–84.

[13] Robin Hoeks, "'Many Great Treasures' of 'Great Beauty,' or 'Crude and Cramped'? The Appraisal of 'Nineveh's Remains' by Austen Henry Layard," *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 28, no. 1 (2018): 1–10, at 2; Frederick N. Bohrer, "Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France," *Art Bulletin* 80, no. 2 (1998): 336–56. Stephanie Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Chicago, 2006), has traced the growing appreciation for Egyptian antiquities in Britain during the early nineteenth century, although the most famous discoveries were obviously too large to relocate.

[14] Shawn Malley, "Layard Enterprise: Victorian Archaeology and Informal Imperialism in Mesopotamia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 4 (2008): 623–46, at 637, 639.

[15] Walter Morrison, ed., *The Recovery of Jerusalem: A Narrative of Exploration and Discovery in the City and the Holy Land* (London, 1871), xxi.

[16] P. R. S. Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1991), 48–55. The best overview of nineteenth-century archaeology in Palestine is Neil Asher Silberman, *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology, and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799–1917* (New York, 1982).

[17] Will Hunt, *Underground: A Human History of the Worlds Beneath Our Feet* (New York, 2019).

originally titled "Alice's Adventures Under Ground."[18] I. K. Brunel's thirteen-hundred-foot-long Thames Tunnel, which newspapers described as a veritable portal to the East, opened to the public in 1843.[19] Fifteen years later, in the wake of the Great Stink of 1858, when unseasonably hot weather exacerbated the smell of untreated human and industrial waste on the Thames, Joseph Bazalgette, chief engineer of London's Metropolitan Board of Works, began construction of an extensive system of sewers, some of them dug down vertically from the surface using the "cut and cover" method, others bored horizontally deep below street level. London papers again framed the activity in imperial terms: "We can colonize the remotest ends of the earth," the *Illustrated London News* opined, "[W]e can conquer India . . . we can spread our name, and our fame, and our fructifying wealth to every part of the world; but we cannot clean the River Thames."[20] By the time the first branch of London's underground Metropolitan Railway opened in 1863, the conquest of the city's subterranean depths was well underway. The 1860s, then, were the decade when the underground began to emerge as a site of exploration and conquest.

Despite the imperial language used to describe the hollowing out of London's underground, the imperial underground has remained largely unexamined, perhaps because empires were about surveillance and control whereas underground spaces were unseen and ungovernable. Scholars have made clear the connection between surveillance and the modern state: to govern territories, one must know them, and to know them one must be able to see them.[21] But what about when the imperial state cannot see—or cannot see very far?[22] Simpson's paintings illuminate a moment in the history of British imperialism in Palestine—the decades between the arrival of the first surveyors in 1840 and Britain's conquest of the region in 1917—when the British had limited visibility into and over the area. The images are a reminder that the British Empire was not static or monolithic but was instead a constantly evolving hodgepodge of colonies, protectorates, dominions, spheres of influence, and forms of rule. Moreover, well into the nineteenth

[18] Verne's novel was originally published in French as *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (Paris, 1864); the first English language edition was *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (London, 1871), no translator identified; Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in London in 1865. See also Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground: An Essay on Technology, Society, and the Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); David Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World beneath Paris and London* (Ithaca, 2005); Paul Dobraszczyk, "Sewers, Wood Engraving, and the Sublime: Picturing London's Main Drainage System in the *Illustrated London News*, 1859–62," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38, no. 4 (2005): 349–78. For histories of underground London, see Richard Trench and Ellis Hillman, *London under London* (London, 1993); Stephen Smith, *Underground London: Travels beneath the Streets* (London, 2010); Peter Ackroyd, *London Under: The Secret History beneath the Streets* (London, 2011); Haewon Hwang, *London's Underground Spaces: Representing the Victorian City, 1840–1915* (Edinburgh, 2013).

[19] David L. Pike, "'The Greatest Wonder of the World': Brunel's Tunnel and the Meanings of Underground London," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33, no. 2 (2005): 341–67.

[20] *Illustrated London News*, 26 June 1858, 626–27. Mid-Victorian writer and theater impresario John Hollingshead cemented the imperial connection when he referred to London as "the modern Nineveh" in his *Underground London* (London, 1862), 2–3, claiming that the "dark arches" down by the river were "the favorite haunt" of "City Arabs" and other "wild tribes of London."

[21] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998); Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford, 2008).

[22] For a suggestive introduction, see Siobhan Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750–1850* (Philadelphia, 2015).

century—the Age of High Imperialism—there were regions where the British were wandering in the imperial darkness with no maps: not just in Africa but in the Middle East, and not just above ground but below. Simpson's paintings also point toward a new imperial aesthetic that articulated a new form of colonial space. Finally, they suggest that the construction of an underground empire, as with tourism, missionary work, and the commercialization of colonial commodities, helped lay the foundations for a more formal empire on the surface.

I

Although Britain did not formally conquer Palestine until 1917, British involvement in the region had been deepening for almost a century.[23] The British government first set up a consulate in Jerusalem in 1838, largely to counter Russian influence in the area, although Lord Shaftesbury's Christian Restorationism seems to have played a role as well.[24] David Roberts's journey through Egypt and Syria later that year, when he made hundreds of sketches that would serve as the basis for his phenomenally popular lithographs and the monumental multivolume sets into which they were bound, provided the Victorian public with its first glimpse of the biblical landscape and of ancient Near Eastern monuments.[25] Until the 1850s, however, traveling to Palestine was a difficult and hazardous undertaking. Hotels were virtually nonexistent outside of Jerusalem; there were no carriage roads; and with few horses available, donkeys were the primary method of transport. When John Murray's *Handbook for Travelers in Syria and Palestine* was first published in 1858, only fifty tourists a year were making the trip.[26] Still, an 1862 tour by the Prince of Wales, accompanied by photographer Francis Bedford, was thoroughly covered by the press and generated much interest; Bedford's pictures were subsequently exhibited in London and published as a three-volume set.[27]

A pivotal moment in the British exploration of Palestine came in 1864 when Angela Burdett-Coutts, scion of the prominent banking family, donated £500 to the Jerusalem Water Relief Society and used her political influence to secure War Office approval for a team of officers from the Royal Engineers to undertake a

[23] Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York, 1984); Robert T. Harrison, *Britain in the Middle East, 1619–1971* (London, 2016); Alexander Schölch, "Britain in Palestine, 1838–1882: The Roots of the Balfour Policy," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22, no. 1 (1992): 39–56; Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856–1882* (Washington, DC, 1993), 47–75; Jonathan Parry, *Promised Lands: The British and the Ottoman Middle East* (Princeton, 2022).

[24] Meir Vereté, "Why Was a British Consulate Established in Jerusalem?" *English Historical Review* 85, no. 335 (1970): 316–45.

[25] W. D. Davis, Eric M. Meyers, and Sarah Walker Schroth, eds., *Jerusalem and the Holy Land Rediscovered: The Prints and Drawings of David Roberts, 1796–1864* (Durham, 1997); Amanda M. Burritt, *Visualizing Britain's Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2020).

[26] Moscrop, *Measuring Jerusalem*, 48; Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London, 1991), 57–58, 120, 135; *A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine* (London, 1858), xlix. Benjamin Disraeli, who visited Jerusalem in 1831, was one of the more famous early tourists. See Robert Blake, *Disraeli's Grand Tour: Benjamin Disraeli and the Holy Land, 1830–31* (New York, 1982), 61–78.

[27] Yehoshua ben Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem, 2007), 175–76; Linda Wheatley-Irving, "Holy Land Photographs and Their Worlds: Francis Bedford and the 'Tour in the East,'" *Jerusalem Quarterly* 31 (Summer 2007): 79–96.

survey of Jerusalem as a preliminary step toward improving the city's derisory water supply. This initiative, prompted by demand for clean water by growing numbers of European and American tourists, was part of the revolution in urban governance that began in Britain during the 1840s and spread throughout Britain's empire, which sought to upgrade water supply systems and infrastructure to create more hygienic and "civilized" societies.[28] The movement underscores what Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler have called "the imperative of placing colony and metropole in one analytic frame,"[29] in this case the excavation and management of previously inaccessible and underutilized underground spaces in different locations across the British imperium. Additionally, the War Office's strategic interest in Suez and the surrounding area had grown during the 1857 rebellion in India when the army found itself in need of an alternative to the longer and more perilous Cape route to the East.[30]

The surveyors were led by Captain Charles Wilson, a devout Christian who had recently returned to London after six years on the Boundary Commission that mapped the 49th parallel between the United States and British North America. In addition to producing the first detailed map of Jerusalem, which would remain unsurpassed for seventy years, Wilson and his assistants charted the city's ancient water systems, many of which ran beneath the Temple Mount. Whereas previous explorers in Jerusalem such as American biblical scholar Edward Robinson had restricted their investigations to whatever structures were visible from the surface, Wilson and his men went underground. And as they crawled through sewers and clambered into old cisterns, they came upon previously unknown evidence of the biblical period as well as the eponymously named Wilson's Arch, adjacent to the Western Wall, which had supported a bridge connecting the ancient temple with the rest of the city.[31]

Wilson's expedition was such a success that it spurred the establishment of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1865. The organization's objectives were to explore Jerusalem and other Holy Land sites for archeological purposes and to study the flora, fauna, and other natural resources of the region, but there were religious and

[28] John Irwine Whitty, *Proposed Water Supply and Sewerage for Jerusalem with Description of Its Present State and Former Resources* (London, 1863), 20; John Broich, "Engineering the Empire: British Water Supply Systems and Colonial Societies, 1850–1900," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 346–65; Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003), 70–75; Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick: Britain, 1800–1854* (Cambridge, 1998).

[29] Frederick Cooper and Anne Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Anne Laura Stoler (Berkeley, 1997), 1–56, at 4.

[30] D. A. Farnie, *East and West of Suez: The Suez Canal in History, 1854–1956* (Oxford, 1969), 45; Moscrop, *Measuring Jerusalem*, 58. In 1855, Naval Officer William Allen advocated the construction of a canal between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea through the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea as an alternative to the proposed Suez Canal route to India and argued that the restoration of the Jews to "the land of their inheritance" would facilitate that project. William Allen, *The Dead Sea: A New Route to India: With Other Fragments and Gleanings in the East*, 2 vols. (London, 1855), 1:vi, 2:113.

[31] Morrison, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 15–16; Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 84; Joe Uziel, Tehillah Lieberman, and Avi Solomon, "The Excavations beneath Wilson's Arch: New Light on Roman Period Jerusalem," *Tel Aviv* 46, no. 2 (2019): 237–66.

imperial aims as well.[32] In his opening remarks at the fund's first public meeting held at Willis's Rooms in London's St. James's Square, William Thompson, the archbishop of York, appealed both to English patriotism and English Protestantism: "This country of Palestine belongs to you and me," he declared. "It is essentially ours . . . We mean to walk through Palestine in the length and in the breadth of it because that land has been given unto us. It is the land from which comes the news of our redemption. It is the land towards which we turn as a fountain of all our hopes . . . It is the land to which we may look with as true a patriotism as we do to this dear old England, which we love so much.'" He called for a "new crusade" to rescue the country "from darkness and oblivion."[33] It was a brazen assertion of imperial superiority that inverted William Blake's famous line about building Jerusalem in England into an imperial vision of England in Jerusalem, eliding the geographical distance between imperial center and colonial periphery and usurping for the English the Jews' historical status as God's chosen people.[34]

From the outset, the Palestine Exploration Fund intended that much of its work in and around Jerusalem should take place underground. The 1865 prospectus noted that while what was above ground would be accurately known once Wilson's Ordinance Survey was completed, "below the surface hardly anything has yet been discovered."[35] Arthur Stanley, the dean of Westminster, who had guided the Prince of Wales on his 1862 tour of the Holy Land, pointed out at a fundraising meeting that "without excavation all the theories and speculations that existed about the internal topography of Jerusalem rested upon mere air," including such questions as whether the Church of the Holy Sepulchre really marked the site of Jesus's Tomb, the extent of the Temple Mount, and the whereabouts of the tombs of David and Solomon.[36] Since most of the places connected with the New Testament were already under Orthodox or Latin Christian control, the fund was particularly interested in Old Testament sites that would enable them to link Anglican Protestantism to the ancient Israelites and thus to the concept of a chosen people.[37] It was akin to a treasure hunt, with the archbishop of York promising that "under the sacred city monuments of the greatest value and importance would be found in every foot deep of the ground."[38] As

[32] Palestine Exploration Fund Minute Book, 22 June 1865, PEF/DA/EC/1, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives, Greenwich, London.

[33] "Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting Held in Willis's Rooms [. . .] June 22, 1865," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 3–4, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[34] Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (Oxford, 2000), 1–17. Jerusalem was an important cultural and historical touchstone that served as a moral and religious counterpoint to Rome in the nineteenth-century British imperial imagination; see Eric M. Reisenauer, "Between the Eternal City and the Holy City: Rome, Jerusalem, and the Imperial Ideal in Britain," *Canadian Journal of History* 44, no. 2 (2009): 237–60.

[35] "Prospectus," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 3, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[36] "Meeting at Cambridge [. . .] May 8, 1867," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 6, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives. More broadly, see David M. Jacobson, "Charles Warren: An Appraisal of his Contribution to the Archeology of Jerusalem," *Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archeological Society*, no. 27 (2009): 31–61.

[37] Lorenzo Kamel, *Imperial Perceptions of Palestine: British Influence and Power in Late Ottoman Times* (London, 2015), 14; Moscrop, *Measuring Palestine*, 2.

[38] "Report of the Proceedings at [. . .] Willis's Rooms," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 3, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

French archeologist Charles-Jean-Melchior de Vogüé insisted, there was little to discover in Palestine except by digging: "The most part of what is above ground has been . . . seen and described over again," he affirmed. "Therefore, what is to be done now? It is to excavate."[39]

With donations rolling in, including £150 from Queen Victoria, the Palestine Exploration Fund quickly arranged another expedition, this time led by twenty-seven-year-old Welsh-born army officer (and freemason) Charles Warren, who arrived in Jerusalem in 1867.[40] An experienced surveyor with a background in military mining, he had spent six years in Gibraltar where he had scaled the famous limestone promontory and explored the caves in which some of the first Neanderthal skulls were unearthed.[41] He had been raised in a devout household—his grandfather had been dean of Bangor Cathedral—which meant that his religious sympathies aligned with the fund's Christian restorationist and evangelical, albeit nonsectarian, leanings. He was accompanied by his friend Corporal Henry Birtles of the Horse Guards, who had served with him in Gibraltar, and by a photographer, Captain Henry Phillips, as well as several sappers to conduct the surveying.

Warren's brief was "to make discoveries in Jerusalem, more particularly in that portion of it known as the Haram area . . . by excavation or by any other mode of exploration."[42] Armed with picks and ropes but without official permission from Constantinople, the enterprising Warren convinced the Ottoman ruler of Jerusalem, Izzet Pasha, to let him dig around (but not inside) the Temple Mount.[43] Even so, Warren and his men frequently raised the hackles of the Arab residents of the city. One day as they were digging near the southern wall of the compound, they uncovered a passageway leading under the platform; as they began to clear it, the pounding of their sledgehammers disturbed the worshippers praying in the Al-Aqsa Mosque

[39] "Report of the Proceedings at [. . .] Willis's Rooms," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 8, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[40] On the role of freemasons in the empire, see Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717–1927* (Chapel Hill, 2007). In 1877 Warren gave a paper on the Temple of Solomon at the Freemasons' Hall in London; see Warren, "On the Orientation of Temples," *Ars Quator Coronatorum* 1 (1888): 36–45. After finishing his work in Palestine, Warren spent time in southern Africa demarcating the boundary between British-administered Griqualand and the Boer Orange Free State, and saw action in the Cape Frontier War of 1877–78. He was subsequently appointed British administrator and commander-in-chief of Griqualand West. In 1882, he was asked to lead a search party to find the Orientalist explorer Edward Palmer and his companions, who had disappeared in the Sinai Desert. When they were found, murdered, Warren tracked down the culprits. In 1885, he was back in South Africa to serve as administrator of Bechuanaland. His greatest fame, however, came not overseas but in London, as commissioner of the Metropolitan Police from 1886 to 1888, a period that included the Jack the Ripper murders. Warren then went overseas again, serving in Singapore from 1889 to 1894 and then in the Anglo-Boer War in 1889–1900. See Kevin Shillington, *Charles Warren: Royal Engineer in the Age of Empire* (Bath, 2020).

[41] Edward Rose and John Diemer, "British Pioneers of the Geology of Gibraltar, Part 2: Cave Archaeology and Geological Survey of the Rock, 1863 to 1878," *Earth Sciences History* 33, no. 1 (2014): 26–58.

[42] Watkin W. Williams, *The Life of General Sir Charles Warren* (Oxford, 1941), 41.

[43] "Reports from Lieutenant Charles Warren [. . .] to George Grove," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 1, 39, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives; translation of Vizirial letter to the governor of Jerusalem granting permission for Warren to excavate certain localities in Jerusalem, 15 May 1868, PEF/JER/WAR/4, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives; [Edmund] Hammond to Archbishop of York, with copy translation of Vizierial letter, noting that authorization to excavate within the Mosque of Omar was still being withheld, 15 June 1868, PEF/JER/WAR/5, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

above, who pelted them with stones. The riot did not end until soldiers from a local garrison were called in.[44] Warren also encountered opposition when he set up operations southeast of the Old City of Jerusalem, receiving pushback from one local Arab leader, who told him "we had no business out of our own country."[45] Homeowners near Wilson's Arch were also able to persuade the pasha to shut down Warren's operations in that area as well, at least temporarily.[46] Clearly, Wilson and his work were perceived as threats.

The incident at the Al-Aqsa Mosque forced Warren to suspend work until he received his *firman*, an official letter of permission, from Constantinople, but when it arrived, he found to his chagrin that it expressly forbade excavations in the vicinity of religious shrines. As he wrote in *Underground Jerusalem* (1876), his attempt at a popular account of his activities, "My instructions desired me to excavate about the Noble Sanctuary; my vizierial letter strictly forbade such work."[47] Refusing to be deterred, and convinced that Ottoman officials would not challenge the power of an imperial *firman*, especially one they had not read, Warren waved the document in the face of anyone who asked if he had permission to dig without ever revealing its contents.[48] Still, he decided to decamp temporarily from the area around the Temple Mount to the Christian Quarter near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, hoping to determine the location of Jesus's Tomb. When Ottoman soldiers closed that site, too, Warren began a new excavation near Silwan, earning him the nickname "The Mole," because every time the pasha shut down one of his digs, he would pop up somewhere else.[49] As John "Rob Roy" MacGregor, a Scottish sportsman who captured public attention with an adventurous canoe trip down the Jordan River before meeting up with Warren in Jerusalem, observed, "Mr. Warren . . . seems to have a subterranean turn of mind."[50]

Warren eventually leased some private land well away from the Haram, and, drawing on his experience in military mining, sank long vertical shafts, some measuring over one hundred feet deep, down to the bedrock and from there dug horizontal galleries toward the foundation of the wall that encircles the Temple Mount (figure 2). The digging was perilous, with cave-ins a constant threat and the ground shifting beneath their feet. Warren wrote: "[In] the places where we worked there were often layers of stone chips many feet deep, through which we had to make our way, which had no cohesion and would run like water." At times the stones "flowed . . . in the manner that corn flows out at the lower opening in an Indian granary. . . only the stones flow much more freely and vigorously."[51] The imperial reference is revealing; clearly the East was marked by considerable instability. Warren used this metaphor many times in *Underground Jerusalem*: After an

[44] Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 91.

[45] Wilson to Grove, 25 February 1868, PEF/JER/WAR/3, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[46] "Reports from Lieutenant Charles Warren [. . .] to George Grove," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 25, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives; George Grove, "Jerusalem Exploration Fund," *Times*, 3 March 1868; F. W. Holland, "Palestine Exploration Fund," *Times*, 7 May 1868.

[47] Charles Warren, *Underground Jerusalem: An Account of Some of the Principal Difficulties Encountered in Its Exploration* [. . .] (London, 1876), 6.

[48] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 146; Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 90–92.

[49] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 145.

[50] Rob Roy [John MacGregor], "A Canoe Voyage in Palestine," *Times*, 5 April 1869.

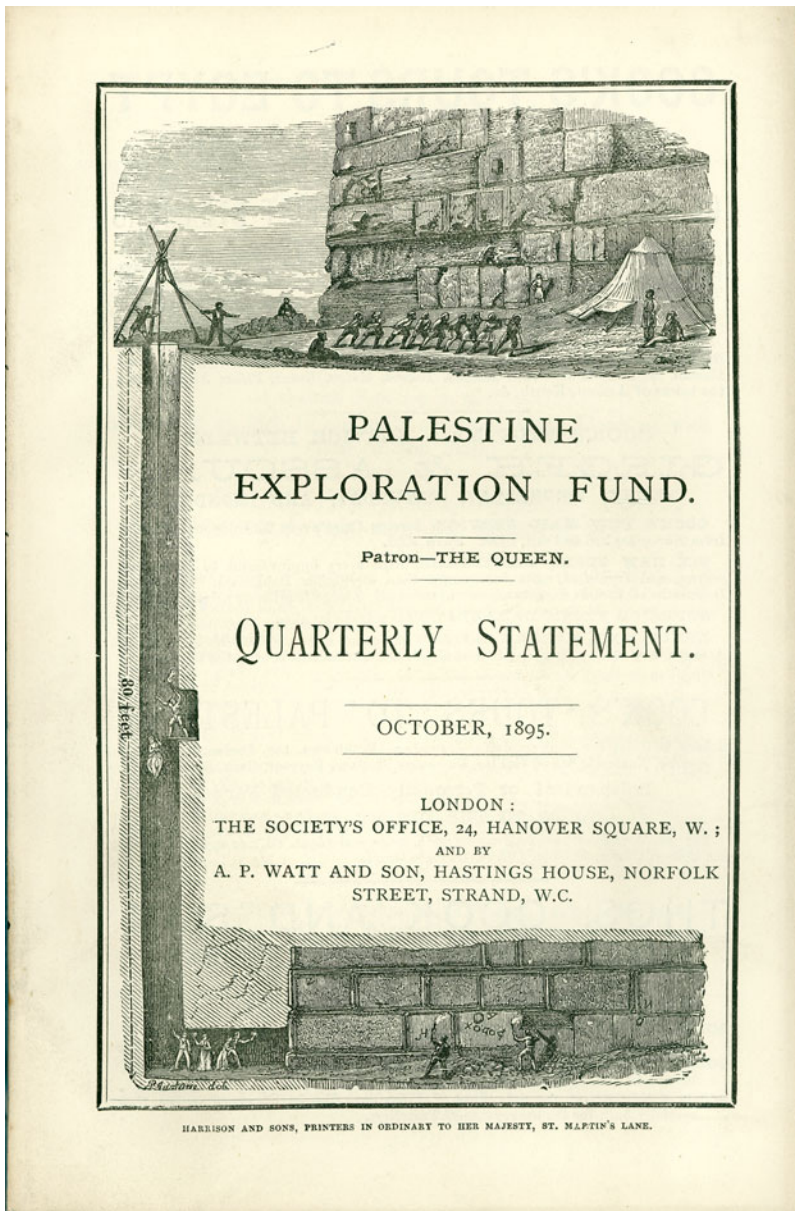[51] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 153, 155.

Figure 2—*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (October 1895) featuring an engraving by Percy Justyne (1812–1883) of a William Simpson sketch of the shaft Warren dug at the southeast corner of the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). The cross-section view shows a woman in a billowing skirt being lowered in a chair to join a group of visitors in a tunnel who are inspecting the base of the massive wall. The image first appeared in Walter Morrison, ed., *The Recovery of Jerusalem: A Narrative of Exploration and Discovery* (London, 1871), 35, and was used unchanged on the title page of the Palestine Exploration Fund's journal from 1872 to 1937. Courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund, London.

excursion to Gilead (the mountains east of the Jordan River), for example, he wrote that when he returned to Jerusalem, he "hoped to find matters on a better footing,"[52] referring to his quest for British consular assistance with his endeavors but perhaps with deeper meaning as well.

One especially harrowing underground excursion was through an ancient water channel running southward from the Herodian-era Struthion Pool (located near the eastern end of the Via Dolorosa, beneath the Convent of the Sisters of Zion) toward the Western Wall, where it fed one of the cisterns underneath the Temple Mount. As he recounted in *Underground Jerusalem*, Warren was undeterred by the fetid refuse filling the waterway:

> I determined to trace out this passage, and for this purpose got a few old planks and made a perilous voyage on the sewage . . . to a bend from whence I could see a magnificent passage cut in the rock . . . I procured three old doors, and proceeded with Sergeant Birtles to our work . . . We laid the first door on the sewage, then one in front of it, taking care to keep ourselves each on a door; then taking up the hinder of the three it was passed to the front, and so we moved on. The sewage in some places was more liquid than in others, but in every case it sucked in the doors so that we had much difficulty in getting the hinder ones up, while those we were on sunk down, first on one side and then on the other as we tried to keep our balance.[53]

After traversing some sixty feet in this fashion, Warren and Birtles reached a dam that enabled them to take the doors out of the water and catch their breath. But the footing was still precarious: "Everything had now become so slippery with sewage that we had to exercise the greatest caution in lowering the doors and ourselves down, lest an unlucky false step . . . cause a header into the murky liquid—a fall which must have been fatal—and what honor would there have been in dying like a rat in a pool of sewage."[54] Seemingly unfazed by this perilous journey, Warren diligently filed a report of the day's activities to which he appended a schematic sketch of the channel showing him and Birtles as two tiny figures edging forward on their makeshift rafts, deep below the ground (figure 3).[55] The image is the antithesis of the monarch-of-all-I-survey imperial panorama and reflects the challenges not just of exploring but of illustrating the underground empire.

Warren's description, which combines humor with great bravura, shows him navigating—even surfing—his way down the underground river, like Mungo Park on the Niger or James Tuckey on the Congo. Narratologically, he has sensationalized his subterranean excursion as a dangerous game while simultaneously constructing an image of himself as a larger-than-life explorer-hero capable of daring deeds and narrow escapes in ways common in nineteenth-century imperial literature. Such accounts frequently took the conventions of the traditional quest romance and reinterpreted them in a colonial context, blurring fact and fiction, journal and journalism, scientific description and literary prose, and inviting readers to enter an unstable zone

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[52] Warren, 286.
[53] Warren, 350–51.
[54] Warren, 351.
[55] "Reports from Lieutenant Charles Warren [. . .] to George Grove," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 35, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.
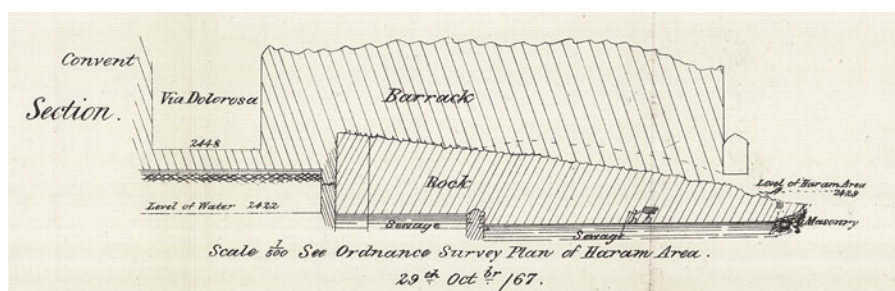
Figure 3—Charles Warren, *Sketch, Plan & Section of passage leading from Convent of Sisters of Sion* [sic] *to Seria: Discovered by Lt. Warren* (detail), 1867, pen on paper, PEF-DA-JER-WA-60-2.6-sewage, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

with an alien landscape—in this case, the underground—that only the adventurer could traverse.[56] In Warren's retelling, even the sewer, a place of dirt, disease, and danger, is less a site of repulsion than of reclamation.

Throughout his time in Jerusalem, Warren demonstrated remarkable confidence underground and frequently portrayed himself having fun while exploring. One day when he was visiting the Temple Mount he stumbled on a loose flagstone. He promptly hoisted it up with ropes and levers and disappeared into a cavern below, "with a good-humored joke to the anxious Sheikh" who was monitoring the area. After twenty minutes of suspense, there was a cheerful "Hallo!" as Warren popped up a hundred yards away "in a totally unexpected direction . . . having traversed a new passage under the grass in total darkness."[57] Another dramatic underground adventure took place inside the Dome of the Rock, where Warren found several stones that he was able to lift up, giving him access to the caverns beneath the Foundation Stone that he had not been able to reach any other way. With Birtles and several women on hand to distract the guards whom he had bribed to let him into the sanctuary in the first place, Warren "vaulted over the high railing" that surrounded the sacred rock, nearly dislocating his shoulder in the process, and spent a few minutes in the secret cave below, called the Well of Souls, where, according to Islamic legend, the spirits of the dead can be heard awaiting Judgment Day.[58] Here again Warren's emphasis on his resourcefulness shines through, along with the playfulness that was an important element in the Victorian construction of

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[56] John M. MacKenzie, "Heroic Myths of Empire," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850–1950*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester, 1992), 109–38, esp. 113–15; Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), 236, 252–53; Nicoletta Brazzelli, "Fictionalizing the Encounter with the Other: Henry Morton Stanley and the African Wilderness (1851–1856)," in *British Narratives of Exploration: Case Studies of the Self and Other*, ed. Frédéric Regard (London, 2009), 193–202; Tim Jeal, *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure* (New Haven, 2011). On self-fashioning and authority in travel writing, see Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850–1900* (Manchester, 1994).

[57] Roy, "A Canoe Voyage in Palestine."

[58] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 402–7.

manliness.[59] His account, which implies a level of native slothfulness and gullibility, also served British imperial interests by branding Palestine as degraded and in need of Britain's improving presence.[60]

Despite the challenges, real and exaggerated, the payoff was considerable. Warren unearthed evidence that King David's Jerusalem lay outside the modern walls of the Old City; he traced the subterranean aqueduct known as Hezekiah's Tunnel that had brought water to the ancient city; and he and his men excavated a number of oil lamps and pottery jar handles, some stamped in Paleo-Hebrew with the inscription "Belonging to the King," which were the first verifiable biblical artifacts scientifically excavated in the city.[61] For three years, Warren was indefatigable in his exploration of the area underneath the Temple Mount, and his findings remain to this day the most complete record of what is located there.[62]

Warren's work also helped promote the idea that the historic Jerusalem was not the city that appeared on the surface but rather the one hidden beneath, borne out in titles like his own *Underground Jerusalem* (1876) as well as Frank DeHass's *Buried Cities Recovered* (1882) and George St. Claire's *The Buried City of Jerusalem* (1887).[63] As Karl Baedeker explained in his 1876 guidebook to the region, "It is only by patiently penetrating beneath the modern crust of rubbish and rottenness, which shrouds the sacred places from view," that travelers could reach "the Jerusalem of antiquity."[64] This ancient city, the *Times* enthusiastically reported, was calling out to "the Christian and the Jew to heave its burden off [and] to open the dark to light and air"—in effect, to uncover the Judeo-Christian past beneath the Muslim present.[65] Warren's archeological work was not just about knowing the past: it was about creating a past in order to lay the foundations for colonization in the future.

Back in London, however, there was disappointment in some quarters that Warren had not brought back any major art objects or sculptures to rival the winged lions that Layard had discovered at Nineveh.[66] Nonetheless, the Palestine Exploration Fund was satisfied with his efforts. As its 1868 report bragged, "For the first time the actual streets of the ancient city have been reached—underground passages, which have been hidden for centuries . . . have been brought to light, and . . . a

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[59] Elaine Freedgood, *Victorian Writing about Risk: Imagining a Safe England in a Dangerous World* (Cambridge, 2000), 108–12; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 1999), 88–89.

[60] Kennedy, *Lost Blank Spaces*, 259. In his poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899), Kipling wrote famously about "sloth and heathen folly." Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (London, 1940), 323–24.

[61] Shimon Gibson and David M. Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem: A Sourcebook on the Cisterns, Subterranean Chambers, and Conduits of the Haram al-Sharif* (Oxford, 1996), 15–17.

[62] Alan Balfour, *Solomon's Temple: Myth, Conflict, and Faith* (Chichester, 2012), 241.

[63] Frank S. DeHass, *Buried Cities Recovered, or, Explorations in Bible Lands*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia, 1882); George St. Claire, *The Buried City of Jerusalem and General Exploration of Palestine* (London, 1887).

[64] Karl Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria, with Routes through Mesopotamia and Babylonia and the Island of Cyprus: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig, 1876), 145.

[65] Roy, "A Canoe Voyage in Palestine." See also "The Palestine Exploration Fund," *Saturday Review* 26, no. 670 (29 August 1868), 295–96; Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture*, 178.

[66] Katharina Galor and Gideon Avni, eds., *Unearthing Jerusalem: 150 Years of Archeological Research in the Holy City* (Winona Lakes, 2011), 41.

complicated network of drains and reservoirs is being laid bare."[67] Walter Besant, the nineteenth-century historian who served as the fund's secretary for almost twenty years, also praised his achievements: "It was Warren who . . . stripped the rubbish from the rocks, and showed the glorious Temple standing within its walls; . . . it was he who laid open the valleys now covered up and hidden; he who opened the secret passages, the ancient aqueducts, the bridge connecting the temple and the town. Whatever else may be done in the future, his name will always be associated with the Holy City which he first recovered."[68] Warren's exploits were also covered in the *Times*, although the newspaper noted that his reports lacked visual images that could spark the public's imagination.[69] For that he needed William Simpson.

II

William Simpson was born in Glasgow in 1823 to a working-class family. Although he had little formal education, by the age of fourteen he was spending his evenings attending free art lectures at a local Mechanics' Institute and had earned himself an apprenticeship at a nearby printing firm. In 1851, he moved to London and took up employment with Day & Son, a prominent lithographer. When the Crimean War broke out three years later, Simpson was sent to make on-the-spot sketches. His firsthand depictions of the war helped bring home to the Victorian public the reality of that ill-managed campaign, cementing his status as one of the first war correspondents and earning him the nickname "Crimea Simpson." From 1859 to 1862, he was in India drawing scenes related to the 1857 Mutiny, probably for a multivolume work intended to rival David Roberts's *The Holy Land*. Although this project never came to fruition, a selection of images was published under the title *India, Ancient and Modern* in 1867.[70] In 1868, the *Illustrated London News* dispatched Simpson to Abyssinia to document the British Army's efforts to rescue some missionaries who had been taken hostage. The following year, having secured the favor of the royal family, Simpson accompanied the Prince of Wales to Egypt for the opening of the Suez Canal and then journeyed to Jerusalem to meet Warren and make sketches of his excavations.[71]

The first place that Warren took him was down an eighty-foot shaft he had dug at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount that connected to a horizontal tunnel, shored up with wood boards, to see some red letters written on the large Herodian ashlar stones of the retaining wall (figure 4). These markings were at the time believed to have been created by the Phoenician masons who had laid the foundation of Solomon's temple in the tenth century BCE, although it now seems more likely

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[67] "Extracts from the Report of the Public Meeting Held at Willis's Rooms, June 11th, 1868," Palestine Exploration Fund, *Proceedings and Notes (1865–69)*, 4, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[68] Walter Besant, *Twenty-One Years' Work in the Holy Land* [. . .] (London, 1886), 62.

[69] [No title], *Times*, 13 December 1867.

[70] David Roberts, *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, and Nubia*, 3 vols. (London, 1842–49); William Simpson and John William Kaye, *India, Ancient and Modern*, 2 vols. (London, 1867).

[71] Todd, *Autobiography of William Simpson*; Peter Harrington, "The First True War Artist," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 9, no. 1 (1996): 100–109; Simon Peers, *Mr. William Simpson of The Illustrated London News: Pioneer War Artist, 1823–1899* (London, 1987).

Figure 4—William Simpson, *Foundation of South East Corner of Haram Wall—Jerusalem*, [1869], pencil and watercolor, PEF/P1/09, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

that they date to the late Second Temple period.[72] Another excursion led Simpson below the remains of Robinson's Arch near the Western Wall, where he sketched Henry Birtles squirming through the fallen voussoirs of the arch (figure 5).[73] Although Simpson did not write about his own experience of being underground, John MacGregor memorably described what it was like to descend "down the mouth of a square shaft" and "disappear underground" fifty feet below Robinson's Arch "to see what can be found below." He struggled to find the right words, relying on similes to try to express his feelings of claustrophobia and disorientation: "The hole we are in is like a well . . . and at the dark bottom our passage is through an opening as if into a kitchen grate. . . We grope on all fours, with a hard knock on the head now and then, bending sideways too, as well as up and down, indescribably contorted by angles." It was, he said, "all wreck and confusion."[74] Warren felt similarly: "What a chaos of ruin upon ruin is here to be found, so confusing and perplexing, that I fear it baffles my powers of description."[75]

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[72] Ronny Reich and Yuval Baruch, "The Meaning of the Inscribed Stones at the Corners of the Herodian Temple Mount," *Revue Biblique* 123, no. 1 (2016): 118–23.

[73] Todd, *Autobiography of William Simpson*, 210–11.

[74] Roy, "A Canoe Voyage in Palestine."

[75] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 368.

Figure 5—William Simpson, *Fallen Voussoirs of Robinson's Arch*, 1871, pencil and watercolor, PEF/ P1/16, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

Simpson's Jerusalem watercolors fit into well-established tropes of nineteenth-century Orientalist and picturesque art only insofar as they focus on ruins, reinforcing Dean Stanley's assertion in *The Bible in the Holy Land* (1862) that the "great peculiarity of the present aspect of Palestine" is that it is "a Land of Ruins."[76] This

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[76] Arthur Stanley, *The Bible in the Holy Land*: *Being Extracts from Canon Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine"* (London, 1862), 25. For scholarly discussions of ruins, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978); Nochlin, "Imaginary Orient"; Sarah Tiffin, *Southeast Asia in Ruins: Art and Empire in the Early 19th*

emphasis was not without broader significance. "When we contemplate ruins," Christopher Woodward has written, "we contemplate our own future."[77] The Victorians were hardly alone in their obsession with ruins as symbols of the fall of empires and expressions of the futility of human aspirations, but in the ruins of the Holy Land lay the prospects not just of Christian resurrection but of imperial resurgence. Simpson's watercolors of the ruins of ancient Jerusalem looked forward as much as backward, calling out to the British to return the ancient city to its former glory. They also had the effect of erasing the more modern Ottoman city above ground—which Mark Twain described as "mournful, dreary, and lifeless" and full of "wretchedness, poverty, and dirt"[78]—in ways that clearly served British imperial interests.

In other respects, however, Simpson's drawings present a radically new view of the Levant. For most nineteenth-century tourists following in the footsteps of David Roberts, the favored view of Jerusalem was from the Mount of Olives, which afforded them a commanding view of the city (figure 6).[79] According to Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt, who made several trips to Palestine, it was from this overlook that "a great landscape was spread out before us, and in the center stood *our city*."[80] As Sara Mills has suggested, it was from just such a high stance that "the fantasy of dominance . . . [was] commonly built;" she labeled the panorama "a device for seeing the country as a future colonized country."[81]

Underground, however, things looked very different. Simpson's paintings consistently feature narrow tunnels and low ceilings shored up with wood planks; his empire is constricted, constrained, and in danger of collapse. The *Illustrated London News* reinforced this impression with its layout of several of his images, each enclosed in a box (figure 1).[82] Whereas the accompanying article, which called on the government to support Warren's labors, was boisterously imperialist, using phrases like "opening up" and "casting light" that were part and parcel of imperialist rhetoric, Simpson's visual lexicon suggests an alternative perspective. In several watercolors, notably *Fallen Voussoir of Robinson's Arch* (figure 7), which depicts a partially obscured Warren in one of the passages he had excavated underneath the remains of Robinson's Arch, giant stones make it difficult, if not impossible, to see more than a few feet ahead. In another, *Rock-Cut Conduit under Robinson's Arch*

Century (Singapore, 2016); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, 2004), 10.

[77] Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins: A Journey through Art, History, and Literature* (New York, 2001), 2–5.

[78] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford, 1869), 559–60.

[79] Alexander Lindsay, *Letters on Egypt, Edom and the Holy Land* (London, 1838), 244; George Fisk, *A Pastor's Memorial of Egypt* [. . .] (New York, 1850), 248.

[80] W. Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols. (New York, 1905), 1:400, my emphases. Dean Stanley also placed great emphasis on elevation, writing in *Bible in the Holy Land*, 31, that "every high point [in the Holy Land] commands a prospect of greater extent than is common in ordinary mountain districts."

[81] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (New York, 1991), 78–79. See also Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 202, 204.

[82] "The Exploration of Jerusalem," *Illustrated London News*, 24 April 1869, 425.

Figure 6—David Roberts, *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives*, 1839, color lithograph, Gift of the Ohio C. Barber Estate through Andrew C. Squire, Cleveland Museum of Art.

(figure 8), Warren stands near the terminus of a sealed tunnel, staring at a map, shovel by his side, looking dejected with nowhere to go. In Simpson's view, the empire is not so much opening up as closed off. Similarly, in *Rock-Cut Cistern under Robinson's Arch* (figure 9), Warren, in uniform, kneels on the ground, poring over a chart, with his notebook and surveying tools by his side, trying to figure out where he is and where to go. A hole in the ceiling offers the only evident means of egress. An Arab assistant stands stoically a few feet away holding an enormous pickaxe in one hand and a magnesium flare in the other. Tellingly, it is he, not Warren, who brings light to the underground cavern.

This motif was one Simpson also used in his watercolor and pencil drawing of the vaulted space under Wilson's Arch, which served as the basis for an engraving used in the *Illustrated London News* article, "The Underground Survey of Jerusalem."[83] In Simpson's painting (figure 10), the entrance, viewed from the inside the hall underneath the arch adjacent to the Western Wall, is barely visible at the far end, a small rectangular cutout in the wall with a ladder standing below. On either side of the chamber, shafts lead deeper underground to cisterns below the stone floor. A pile of rubble in the foreground makes clear that this is a dig in progress and that there is more to be uncovered, creating a dialectic of revelation and concealment that is characteristic of Simpson's Jerusalem pictures. But the *Illustrated London News*

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[83] "The Underground Survey of Jerusalem," *Illustrated London News*, 24 April 1869, 423.

Figure 7—William Simpson, *Fallen Voussoir of Robinson's Arch, Jerusalem*, **1871, pencil and water-color, PEF/P1/7, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.**

made a significant alteration to Simpson's original watercolor: in Simpson's drawing, an Arab man holds the magnesium stick that lights the room, whereas in the published version the Arab man has been relocated to the rear of the scene, relegated

Figure 8—William Simpson, *Rock Cut Conduit under Robinson's Arch, Jerusalem*, 1871, pencil and watercolor, PEF/P1/28, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

to the role of manual laborer, holding a bucket, and it is Warren and a European assistant, presumably Birtles, who bring the light, undercutting the subversive quality of Simpson's work.[84]

[84] "The Explorations at Jerusalem," *Illustrated London News*, 24 April 1869, 424; Innes M. Keighren, Charles W. J. Withers, and Bill Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John*

Figure 9—William Simpson, *Rock-cut Cistern under Robinson's Arch, Jerusalem*, **1871, pencil and watercolor, PEF/P1/10, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.**

Simpson's painting of Solomon's Quarries (also known as Zedekiah's Cave) (figure 11), an extensive network of caves beneath the north wall of Jerusalem's Old City near the Damascus Gate, offers an even more unusual perspective. When Edwin Hodder visited in the 1870s, he felt "a strange feeling of awe in walking through these subterranean caverns," with "rock above, below, [and] around . . . leading into darkness, and seeming to have no end." He felt like a "solitary explorer. . . groping along" on his "journey *underneath* the city."[85] Unique in British imperial art, Simpson's image presents multiple passageways and perspectives simultaneously. If imperial art is generally characterized by its totalizing perspective, fixing

Murray, 1773–1859 (Chicago, 2015), discuss how publishers "commonly modified the original accounts of explorers and travelers, partly for style, partly for content . . . and always with an eye to the market" (ix). See also Peter W. Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News* (Aldershot, 1998); Robert David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination, 1818–1914* (Manchester, 2000), 11; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 59; David Arnold, "Envisioning the Tropics: Joseph Hooker in India and the Himalayas, 1848–1850," in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. Felix Driver and Luciana Martens (Chicago, 2005), 137–55, at 154, all of which discuss the manipulation of illustrations to enhance aesthetic or popular appeal.

[85] Edwin Hodder, *On "Holy Ground": Or, Scenes and Incidents in the Land of Promise* (London, 1874), 199–200. American missionary James Barclay was the first westerner to write about the caverns, in *The City of the Great King: Or, Jerusalem as It Was, as It Is, and as It Is to Be* (Philadelphia, 1857), 456–69, part of what he called "the nether city."

Figure 10—William Simpson, *Wilson's Arch, Jerusalem*, 1869, pencil and watercolor, PEF/P1/19, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

Figure 11—William Simpson, *The Quarry Caverns, Jerusalem*, 1869, pencil and watercolor, PEF/ P1/21, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

colonial people and places into what Anne McClintock has called "panoptical time and anachronistic space,"[86] Simpson here has done the opposite, employing multiple angles of hidden places at transitory moments.

Simpson's emphasis on the time-bound rather than the timeless nature of Warren's underground work is also evident in the paintings that represent Warren in situ and prominently display his *accoutrements*—charts, sketchpad, and measuring instruments—thereby capturing the drama of his excavations with temporality and veracity. These elements attest not only that the places exist but that Simpson himself was there. In these respects, Simpson's art is the opposite of the picturesque style so characteristic of the empire.[87] In fact, the catalogue to Simpson's 1872 exhibition underscores the "unpicturesqueness" of his watercolors, declaring them "absolutely free from all attempt at elegant prettiness and the mere pleasing picture-making of decorative art." Instead, they are described as "bold" and "solid," words seldom used to describe the picturesque.[88]

Simpson's imagery, therefore, articulated a new genre of imperial art that might even be characterized as a new "way of seeing" in that it reimagined the idea of the landscape that had developed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in conjunction with Renaissance techniques of linear perspective.[89] Simpson was not the first British artist to sketch underground: in the 1790s, Thomas and William Daniell made several drawings of India's Elephanta Caves with their rock-cut sculptures, although these were more inside than underground.[90] And Solomon Caesar Malan—Orientalist, linguist, clergyman, and artist—visited Nineveh in 1850 while Layard was conducting his excavations there and made several sketches depicting the subterranean passageways that subsequently appeared in Layard's *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*.[91] But Malan's drawings emphasized the carved reliefs found in the "buried city" more than the underground space itself and in any event were overshadowed by the spectacular nature of what Layard uncovered above ground.[92] In contrast, Simpson focused almost exclusively on what was

[86] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York, 1995), 36.

[87] See, for example, Sean P. Smith, "Aestheticising Empire: The Colonial Picturesque as a Modality of Travel," *Studies in Travel Writing* 23, no. 3 (2019): 280–97; Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Oxford, 1998), 40; Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760–1821* (Philadelphia, 2005), 12, 120.

[88] Simpson, *Underground Jerusalem*, iii.

[89] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1972); Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London, 1984); Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective, and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10, no. 1 (1985): 45–62. This aligns with Robin Kelsey's argument in *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for the U.S. Surveys, 1850–1890* (Berkeley, 2007), 3, that "the instrumentality of surveys was crucial to the emergence of a new pictorial style" and that "the practical imperatives and social organization of survey work spurred pictorial innovation." See also Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1991).

[90] Thomas and William Daniell, "The Entrance to the Elephanta Cave" and "Part of the Interior of the Elephanta," *Oriental Scenery* [. . .] (London, 1795–1807), part 5, plates 7–8. See also "Interior of the Cave of Elephanta," *Illustrated London News*, 23 May 1863, 576.

[91] Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* [. . .] (London, 1853), 55, 104.

[92] This point is underscored in a popular account of Layard's discoveries: James S. Buckingham, *The Buried City of the East, Nineveh: A Narrative of the Discoveries of Mr. Layard and M. Botta at Nimroud and Khorsabad* (London, 1851).

beneath the surface, producing not only a new category of art and an important historical record but an entirely new vision of the British Empire—the view from underground.[93]

III

Most accounts of the British conquest of Palestine in 1917 assume a certain inevitability, however much they might focus on the maneuverings of the European great powers during the long slow decline of the Ottoman Empire.[94] From the establishment of a British consulate in Jerusalem in 1838, to the Crimean War of the 1850s, to the increasing prominence of tourists and missionaries in the 1870s and 1880s, to the growing popularity of Jaffa oranges around the turn of the twentieth century, Britain's incursion can seem like a fait accompli, needing only the strategic imperatives of the First World War to complete the century-long process. Yet from the perspective of the 1860s, when Warren began his archeological digs in and around Jerusalem, the expansion of the British Empire into the Levant was far less certain. Simpson's drawings capture this sense of contingency, portraying a region not yet possessed but in the process of being uncovered. Warren does not yet stand atop Mount Moriah surveying his conquests; instead, he digs from underneath, probing, hoping that the thin rays of light provided by his Arab assistants will be sufficient to illuminate the darkness. He is the precursor to Joseph Conrad's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) as he explores "one of the dark places of the earth," a region the British do not yet know or control.[95]

Simpson's watercolors depict an empire in the making. Palestine would become increasingly prominent in British culture during the second half of the nineteenth century as a proliferation of "scriptural geographies" transformed Palestine into a Holy Land by mapping the region in relation to the Bible.[96] Simpson's sketches of Warren's excavations, however, came at a time of uncertainty, when the British had not yet established their presence in Palestine and did not yet have visibility over

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[93] Although Simpson continued to travel the empire after his time in Jerusalem, with trips to China in 1872, India in 1875, and Afghanistan in 1878 and 1884, he never again made drawings underground.

[94] See Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*; Harrison, *Britain in the Middle East*; Davd Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922* (New York, 1989), 26–30. One exception is Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton, 2008). Efraim and Inari Karsh in *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923* (Cambridge, MA, 1999) downplay the role of the British so much that it is almost as if they conquered the region in what J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London, 1883) called a "fit of absence of mind" (8). Many older studies ignore nineteenth-century Palestine entirely. For example, see R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question* (London, 1935); M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (London, 1966); G. D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London, 1971).

[95] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York, 1990) 3.

[96] Edwin James Aiken, *Scriptural Geography: Portraying the Holy Land* (London, 2009), 18–56. These "scriptural geographies" include Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine* (New York, 1842); John MacGregor, *The "Rob Roy" on the Jordan, Nile, Red Sea, and Gennesareth,* &c [. . .] (London, 1870); Laurence Oliphant, *The Land of Gilead with Excursions in the Lebanon* (Edinburgh, 1880); Charles Wilson, *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai, and Egypt* (London, 1881). See also the famous guidebooks by Murray, Baedeker, and Thomas Cook, the latter himself a member of the Palestine Exploration Fund. See Felicity Cobbing, "Thomas Cook and the Palestine Exploration Fund," *Public Archeology* 11, no. 4 (2012): 179–94.

the land. In this respect, they challenge the Orientalist trope of an omniscient Western gaze. Of course, seen from another perspective, Simpson's artwork depicts explorer-archeologists such as Warren bringing light to one of the dark regions of the globe, akin to Livingstone's missionary work in Africa, with the caveat that it was his Arab assistants who held the light so that he could see. Simpson, therefore, has simultaneously depicted the British in a place of darkness, unable to see, and at the same time, striving to shine a light on that very region, opening it up, paving the way for further incursions. Although scholars have argued that nineteenth-century British writings about and views of Jerusalem had the effect of "creating ownership,"[97] Simpson's drawings clearly do not fall into this category. Similarly, although Edward Said regarded exploration activities such as those in Jerusalem as a tool for imperialist adventures,[98] Simpson's watercolors suggest a much more complicated relationship.

Nonetheless, Warren and Simpson delineated a new kind of colonial space. Scholars have written about liminal space, gendered space, psychosexual space, carceral space, aerial space, and even "blank spaces," but the underground empire was something new and *sui generis*.[99] Although humans have lived in caves for millennia, the underground has historically been a place of fear and uncertainty where humans cannot see, although in nineteenth-century London and other European cities it also became a site of modernity and progress. Warren straddled these seemingly contradictory views, believing he could dispel the darkness even if the material history of the Holy Land remained tantalizingly out of reach. "In excavating those remains of a bygone race," he wrote, "we were groping in a land of shadows and phantoms . . . [and] as the pick opened up the soil, the half-light revealed to us objects which evaded our grasp . . . [and] on being brought to the strong daylight, vanished from view and returned into the dust from which they were constructed. The very bricks ceased to exist as bricks when exposed to the air."[100] Like Freud half a century later with the "collection of picklocks" he used to open Dora's "jewel-case,"[101] or the fictional Indiana Jones, whose archeological finds turn to dust in his hands, the underground empire was ephemeral and elusive in contrast to the mapped, surveilled, and photographed empire. Yet as the British began to probe this new frontier, they turned the underground world into a place not just of darkness and danger but of exploration and excitement that linked together Britain's imperial and Christian restorationist impulses.[102]

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[97] Issam Nasser, "In Their Image: Jerusalem in Nineteenth-Century English Travel Narratives," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 19 (2003): 6–22, at 20.

[98] Said, *Orientalism*, 166–97.

[99] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 59. For a suggestive overview, see John G. Peters, "Joseph Conrad and the Epistemology of Space," *Philosophy and Literature* 40, no. 1 (2016): 98–123. On psychosexual space, see Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester, 1991). On empires as carceral spaces, see Clare Anderson, ed., *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies* (London, 2018). More philosophically, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991).

[100] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 170.

[101] Cesare Romano, *Freud and the Dora Case: A Promise Betrayed* (New York, 2015), 49.

[102] The scholarly literature on frontiers is voluminous, but see Benjamin Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State* (Cambridge, MA, 2020). Thomas Simpson, *The Frontier in British India: Space, Science, and Power in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2021), argues that distinctive forms of colonial power and knowledge developed at the territorial

The conquest of Jerusalem's underground spaces also serves as a counterpose to the conquest of Europe's highest peaks, notably Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, which took place around the same time, suggesting the emergence of a kind of vertical empire. The 1850s and 1860s are widely regarded as a golden age in mountaineering, when climbing became so popular among the middle classes that dozens of clubs formed to promote and institutionalize the activity. In addition to being part of the Grand Tour and a means of accessing the sublime, mountaineering was also seen as a character-building exercise for the gentlemanly middle class, an assertion of masculinity at a time of cultural anxiety.[103] Warren, however, was no effete bourgeois dilettante with cultural aspirations trying to prove his mettle; he was a self-confident military man, in the tradition of the soldier-explorer-adventurer.[104] On the other hand, in marked contrast to mid-nineteenth century mountaineers, he rarely referred to his efforts using the language of conquest. Rather, he framed his work more in terms of forensics, focusing on the precise skills and finesse that were required.

He recognized, however, that the underground, like the mountains, could be a tourist attraction. Women seem to have been especially eager to visit Warren's tunnels as sightseers, participating in what Rosalind Williams has called "cave tourism."[105] In fact, the schematic image of the shaft that Warren dug outside Jerusalem's Old City walls (figure 2) shows a woman in billowing skirts being lowered in a chairlift. Warren actually complained that during Easter season there were so many visitors he had no time for his digging. Still, he understood that tourists—including the Marquess of Bute, who visited Warren in Jerusalem and gave him £250 to help defray his costs—could help publicize his endeavors and provide badly needed funds to the Palestine Exploration Fund.[106] When the first edition of *Cook's Tourist Handbook for Palestine and Syria* appeared in 1876, it included a section on "underground Jerusalem," attesting to the popularity and prominence of Warren's discoveries.[107]

Early British archeological work in Jerusalem, combined with subsequent surveying efforts in Palestine, unquestionably helped lay the groundwork for Britain's eventual conquest of the region. As Warren's fellow surveyor Claude Conder boasted,

fringes of colonial India, in the desert, jungle, and mountains. Frontiers, Simpson writes, "were spaces in which the colonial state was both dramatically present and frequently ineffective" (5), with borders that, like those in Palestine, were "contested and confused, less a coherent exercise in spatial rationality than a jumble of tangled lines" (25). On the complex place of Christian restorationist thought in late-nineteenth century Britain and its connection to the Balfour Declaration, see Eitan Bar-Yosef, "Christian Zionism and Victorian Culture," *Israel Studies* 8, no. 2 (2003): 18–44.

[103] Peter H. Hansen, "Albert Smith, The Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995): 300–24; Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Boulder, 2003). It is worth noting that women were also active in nineteenth-century mountaineering; see Clare Roche, "Women Climbers, 1850–1900: A Challenge to Male Hegemony?" *Sport in History* 33, no. 3 (2013): 1–24.

[104] See Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London, 1994).

[105] Williams, *Notes on the Underground*, 86.

[106] Morrison, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 72–74; Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 411. Bute subsequently purchased several of Simpson's Jerusalem paintings for his private collection; see Eyre-Todd, *Autobiography of William Simpson*, 211.

[107] *Cook's Tourist Handbook for Palestine and Syria* (London, 1876), 182–83.

after making more than a dozen visits to Jerusalem during which he toured almost all of the city's underground passages, "Palestine is thus brought home to England."[108] Certainly there was no doubt about Britain's ultimate intentions: the archbishop of York had already declared in 1865 that Palestine belonged to the English, and a decade later, Charles Warren would write, "The position of Palestine will someday be of much importance to us as a nation, and the sooner we make a good footing in the place the better."[109] His plan was colonization: "The land once flowing with milk and honey. . . remains accursed . . . The land lies fallow and uncared for." There was much support for the colonization of Africa, "but Palestine can get no help." He continued: "A merchant may gather money for any speculation which can be mentioned, as long as he avoids Palestine." He promised, however, that Palestine "is a country where money may be made if proper measures are taken." The problems were not enough people to till the land, not enough capital, no roads or harbors, and insufficient knowledge of farming and husbandry. All of these, he said, could be overcome with "good government," adding, "Many a time have the Arab Muslims said to me, 'When will you take this country and rid us of our oppressors; anything is better than their rule.'"[110] It would take forty years—and many Arabs would rue the day they begged the British to topple Ottoman rule.

Indeed, at times Warren's work resembled a military operation. He and his men occasionally used gunpowder to break up large stones, giving rise to rumors that they were depositing stores of explosives with the intention of blowing up the Temple Mount.[111] Warren also employed army officers who were trained in surveying and mining and who, according to Walter Morrison, member of Parliament for Plymouth and one of the leading promoters of the Palestine Exploration Fund, had "the habit of command, of discipline, [and] of organization, so needful whenever large bodies of laborers are to be superintended."[112] Warren even wrote about the *fellaheen* whom he employed to do most of the manual digging as if they were army recruits, noting, "It took many weeks to drill these men into order, but gradually they learnt obedience," although he also denigrated them as "a lawless set" and "prone to idleness," likening them to "other Easterners" and wishing they were "more attentive to regulations."[113] There were also close links between the Palestine Exploration Fund and the War Office: in addition to giving Warren and his team leave to undertake the work in Palestine, the War Office loaned them equipment.[114]

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[108] Claude Reignier Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine: A Record of Discovery and Adventure* (London, 1880), xii.

[109] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 103.

[110] Warren, 446–51. The year before *Underground Jerusalem* was published, Warren wrote a pamphlet, *The Land of Promise; or, Turkey's Guarantee* (London, 1875), in which he argued that Palestine was already under foreign rule and envisaged the replacement of the Ottomans by a European colonial entity similar to the pre-1857 East India Company that would facilitate the restoration of the Jews to the region. Claude Conder, who conducted the survey of Western Palestine with Kitchener on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, also supported colonization; see Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, 377.

[111] Morrison, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 67.

[112] Walter Morrison, "Lecture at the Plymouth Athenaeum," n.d., PEF/DA/1865/2, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives.

[113] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 150–54.

[114] Walter Morrison to A. S. Ayrton, 13 September 1871, PEF WS/19, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives; Morrison to Aryton, 7 October 1871, PEF WS/24, Palestine Exploration Fund Archives;

Warren also sought the support of the Foreign Office, albeit with only partial success.[115] Regardless, the Palestine Exploration Fund's endeavors clearly served a variety of government agencies, underscoring a model of nineteenth-century British imperial expansion that involved both public and private entities and blurred boundaries between formal and informal empire.

As Martin Lynn insightfully observed, "To focus solely on colonial possessions in examining Britain's expansion overseas in the nineteenth century is to ignore the multifaceted nature of Britain's international position," a point first made by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in their often-cited analysis of the role of free-trade imperialism in upholding British paramountcy.[116] There was a broad expansion of British influence during the nineteenth century that took military, economic, religious, and cultural forms and spread far beyond Britain's territorial holdings to include China and Latin America as well as the Ottoman Empire.[117] Palestine was clearly not officially a part of the British Empire before 1917, but it increasingly became an area of British influence. For much of the nineteenth century, the British saw their role in the Middle East (although that term did not come into vogue until the very end of the century) as defending the region against European rivals, notably the French and Russians. Ironically, this position involved propping up the Ottoman Porte even as Britain was creating a sphere of influence within that regime.

While there were those who, like Warren, harbored colonial ambitions for Palestine, the British government had no such aspirations at this time. On the contrary, governing Palestine would have been, as Jonathan Parry has written, "diplomatically explosive, extremely expensive, and bound to invite awkward local tensions." Instead, Britain pursued a policy of "stealthy rather than overt imperialism" and "quietly growing . . . dominance rather than bombastic celebration."[118] Thinking spatially, one sees Britain gradually encircling Palestine, with India to the east, Egypt to the west, and Aden to the south, comprising a small regional empire.[119] In vertical terms, Britain's exploration underground can be seen as a direct response to Russia beginning construction in 1862 in Jerusalem of a seventeen-acre

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"Palestine Exploration Fund (1865–1884)," OS/1/17/1, National Archives, London; Besant, *Twenty-One Years' Work*, 11.

[115] Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*, 286.

[116] Martin Lynn, "British Policy, Trade, and Informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford, 1999), 101–21, at 101. See also John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1–15; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion* (New York, 1993), 6–9.

[117] On China, see Jürgen Osterhammel, "Britain and China, 1842–1914," in Porter, *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 3:146–69; Jürgen Osterhammel, "Semi-Colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China," in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London, 1986), 290–314, at 297–98; Resat Kasaba, "Treaties and Friendships: British Imperialism, the Ottoman Empire, and China in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 215–41. James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford, 2008), discusses the variety of protected and princely states in Persia and the Persian Gulf that surrounded Britain's informal empire in India.

[118] Parry, *Promised Lands*, 19.

[119] Parry, 298, 317, 334–53, 373–74.

compound above ground that would eventually include a consulate, hospital, church, and rooms for more than three thousand pilgrims, staking Russia's claim to the city.[120]

Jerusalem, though unique, was not the only node in Britain's underground empire. The Australian gold rush began in 1851, just fifteen years before Warren and Simpson went to Jerusalem. At first, diggers panned for gold in existing streams but soon shifted their attention to ancient creek beds, many of them deep underground. Firsthand accounts, aware that the concept of diggings was unfamiliar to readers, reached for metaphors to describe what was taking place. One visitor likened the diggings to gravel pits.[121] Another thought they resembled graveyards with freshly dug tombs.[122] A third drew on language of the body, referring to a region "turned inside out, entrails uppermost, producing as repugnant an effect as well can be imagined."[123] Other observers described the ground as "riddled with holes" so that the effect was "one huge chaos of clay, gravel, [and] stones . . . thrown up out of the bowels of the earth."[124] But for the most part, the focus was not on what the underground looked like or felt like but rather on the visual and environmental impact of the diggings on the surface.[125] Similarly, a decade after Warren and Simpson returned from Jerusalem, prospectors discovered the world's richest deposit of diamonds near Kimberley, South Africa, but there, too, as in Australia, diggers initially focused on what they could gather near the surface using picks and shovels. Not until the 1880s did mining companies begin to experiment with underground operations involving shafts and tunnels.[126]

Thus it was in Jerusalem that the work of Charles Warren and William Simpson for the Palestine Exploration Fund first and most fully articulated an underground imperial space that was unique in the British Empire. Historians have examined both what might be termed the horizontal empire of surveying and professional networks and a vertical empire of mountaineering and aerial surveillance. But there were also the beginnings of an underground empire in the mid-nineteenth century that helped lay the groundwork, as it were, for the more visible and mapped empire on the surface. The underground exploration of nineteenth-century Palestine also played a

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[120] Roger Hardy, *The Bride: An Illustrated History of Palestine, 1850–1948* (Cricklade, 2022), 127; Alexa von Wining, *Intimate Empire: The Mansurov Family in Russia and the Orthodox East, 1855–1936* (Oxford, 2022), 53–85.

[121] Ellen Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852–53* (London, 1853), 79.

[122] Thomas McCombie, *Australian Sketches: The Gold Discovery, Bush Graves, &c.* (London, 1861), 57.

[123] William Kelly, *Life in Victoria, or Victoria in 1853, and Victoria in 1858* [. . .], 2 vols. (London, 1859), 2:173.

[124] William Howitt, *Land, Labour, and Gold: Or, Two Years in Victoria; with Visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land.* (Kilmore, 1855), 254.

[125] Warwick Frost, "The Environmental Impacts of the Victorian Gold Rushes: Miners' Accounts during the First Five Years," *Australian Economic History Review* 53, no. 1 (2013): 72–90. The most prolific artist of the Australian gold rush was Samuel Thomas Gill, who produced dozens of lithographs documenting life on the diggings, including *Sketches of the Gold Diggers Comprising 16 Chromo-Lithographic Plates* (London, [1855]); *The Victorian Gold Fields during 1852 & 3* [. . .] ([Melbourne], 1869); *The Gold Fields of Victoria during 1852–3* (Melbourne, 1872), but none focus on the underground.

[126] Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, 2 vols. (New York, 1906), 1:307–8; Martin Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War: The British, the Boers, and the Making of South Africa* (New York, 2007), 13, 17, 153; Charles V. Allen, "Diamond Mining in the Kimberley Field," *Engineering Magazine* 26, no. 10 (1903): 81–98.

vital role in the construction of a historical narrative that linked Britain's imperial present with the buried civilizations of the ancient past. As Adelene Buckland has observed, "The Victorians, perhaps more than any Britons before them, were diggers and sifters of the past"—whether in the form of dinosaur fossils, rocks and minerals, archeological ruins, debates about human origins, or cultural movements such as the Gothic Revival.[127] Many of these efforts, especially in the imperial realm, took place underground, where the search for the past was also very much about creating a future. The brilliance of Simpson's Jerusalem paintings is not just that they illustrate this new underground realm, and in doing so articulate a new imperial vision, but that they simultaneously illuminate both the precariousness and the potential of Britain's embryonic efforts to establish a presence in the Middle East.

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[127] Adele Buckland, introduction to Adelene Buckland and Sadiah Qureshi, *Time Travelers: Victorian Encounters with Time and History* (Chicago, 2020), xiii. See also Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981); Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1984); A. Bowdoin von Riper, *Men Among the Mammoths: Victorian Science and the Discovery of Human Prehistory* (Chicago, 1993); Martin J. S. Rudwick, *World before Adam: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Reform* (Chicago, 2008); Paul Readman, "The Place of the Past in English Culture, c. 1890–1914," *Past & Present*, no. 186 (2005): 147–99.