

*G. A. SMITH AND S. MERRILL ON JERUSALEM.*¹

THE year 1908 will be memorable to students of Palestinian topography for the appearance within a few months of two great treatises on Jerusalem, both of them by writers of rare competence. Dr. Smith's qualifications are beyond eulogy; for the historical treatment of geography there is no safer nor more delightful guide. Mr. Merrill states on his title-page that he held the office of U.S.A. Consul at Jerusalem for sixteen years, and dedicates his work to Dr. Smith, Sir Charles Warren, and the memory of Sir Charles Wilson, who, he says, urged him to put his notes into permanent shape. Both books are marked by familiar acquaintance with the places which they describe and the controversies that are connected with their identification.

Dr. Smith's treatise carries both history and geography a little beyond the Gospel narrative; to the War of Independence, which brought about the final (or nearly final) downfall of the Jewish state, he has some allusions, but devotes no continuous study. In Mr. Merrill's work, on the other hand, the operations of the Romans occupy a large portion of the space. He works backwards from the period for which we have the most accurate descriptions of ancient Jerusalem. The Scottish writer devotes a whole volume to a continuous history of the city, which might be called a Bible History, since from the time of David the interest is in the main concentrated on the Jewish capital. His other volume treats very fully of the topography and—a less familiar subject—the internal economy

¹ *Jerusalem: the Topography, Economics and History from the earliest times to A.D. 70*, by George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1907-8.

Ancient Jerusalem: by Selah Merrill. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908.

of the ancient city. On the whole we should describe Dr. Smith's treatise as a *Lehrbuch*, Mr. Merrill's as a monograph, intended for those who are already interested in and have some knowledge of the subject.

Has the earnest and indefatigable study that has been devoted to the topography of Jerusalem produced any definite results, or have we to deal with questions like the Authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the mutual relation of the Synoptics, in which the "swing of the pendulum" seems as noticeable as it is in the parliamentary institutions of this country? That is the question which will suggest itself to the reader of these volumes; and it is to be feared that the answer which they will offer will come nearer the latter than the former of these alternatives. The sixth chapter of Dr. Smith's first volume, after a careful examination of different opinions, leads up to the assertion that "the topographical evidence from the present surface, and still more from excavations, tends wholly to the conclusion that" the City of David "lay upon Ophel." "The tradition that Sion lay on the site of the present Citadel is associated with and dependent on the other that the Spring Gihon lay in the head of the Wâdy er-Rabâbî; but we have seen that Gihon is undoubtedly the same as the Virgin's Spring in the Kedron Valley." Evidently, then, we can congratulate ourselves that two controversies are closed—till we turn to Mr. Merrill's volume, where we find some thirty pages (many of them in the form of a Socratic dialogue) of which the purpose is to reduce to absurdity the propositions which Dr. Smith regards as undoubted. We may produce a specimen:—

What is really at stake that certain writers should contend so earnestly for the Ophel ridge theory of the City of David?

A. It is difficult to say. Apparently no serious question is involved, while the contradictions and difficulties are so many and of such a character as to make its validity questionable.

Suppose, however, that in process of time this theory should be established as true, what would follow ?

A. Certain things which are most improbable and which have never been true of any city in the world.

When these improbabilities are enumerated, it must be confessed that they make no very great show. They are all developments of the first: "in rebuilding the city it was so changed as to be totally unlike the original." To prove that this had never happened in the case of any city would be an exceedingly difficult task. So much depends on the length of time during which the city lay in ruins, and the archaeological interest of the rebuilders. Improbability *g* in particular ("the very site was not only obliterated but forgotten") does not appear at all formidable to one who thinks of the transference of city-names sometimes many miles from the original site. Sprenger put together some facts bearing on this question, and thought that the transference of the name Babylon from the ancient capital to Baghdad was perhaps the most distant which history exhibited.

Nevertheless the comparison between the arguments adduced by the two writers is highly instructive, and reveals the difficulty of interpreting the verses on which the mutually destructive theories rest. The chief authority is the Chronicler, who seems to know most about Gihon; according to Dr. Smith's translation "the waters of the Upper Gihon were sealed, and directed down *westwards* to the City of David" (2 Chron. xxxii. 30). This translation seems objectionable on two grounds. In the next line he translates 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 14, "he built an outer wall to the City of David, *west of* Gihon," where the original has precisely the same phrase. Either we must render "west of" in both places, or "west to" in both places. Now by no straining of the conscience can we make Siloam

west of the City of David, according to Dr. Smith's map. Yet if we render the words consistently, one or other of these passages implies that it was. The other objection is that the rendering of the Revised Version, "he stopped the upper spring [rather outlet] of the waters of Gihon," is very much more natural than "the waters of the Upper Gihon." Gihon is thought of as a spring with two issues or channels, an upper and a lower. The upper being dammed, the water is all forced into the lower. This flows downwards to the west of the City of David. This may or may not have been the same operation as that described in xxxii. 4, "they stopped all the fountains and the brook that ran through the midst of the land."

It does not make matters any easier that in the other place where Gihon is mentioned (1 Kings i. 33) it is clearly *below* the City of David, since Solomon has to be brought down thither. If the waters of Gihon had to be directed *down* to the city by Hezekiah, it would follow that they were not below it in the time of David.

Mr. Merrill's discussion is to prove that the Gihon of the Chronicler is the Birket Mamilla, well to the west of Jerusalem. It seems, however, to the present writer that he is involved in difficulties at least equal to those encountered by Dr. Smith. The "brook that ran through the midst of the land" he identifies with the Tyropoean (*sic*) valley, suggesting, however, that for "land" we should emend "city." Hezekiah, we are told, with a great multitude dammed up this stream, to prevent the Assyrians using the water when they invaded the country. The operation is coupled with the "sealing of springs," which the Arabs call the blinding of wells, i.e., filling them so as to prevent the enemy from getting at the water. Hence any interpretation which puts the brook *inside* the city violates the context, and substitutes for an operation which, however

impracticable, would be advantageous to the besieged, one which would only benefit the besieger.

In both writers' treatment of this question the reader will feel that several weak arguments have been introduced, probably owing to the difficulty of obtaining strong ones. The etymological arguments adduced by Dr. Smith (i. 104, 107) seem unsatisfactory. "The *Shiloah* or *Shilloah* is a passive form, and means the 'sent' or 'conducted.'" Now this passive sense of the form *ḵattâl* seems to be found only in the word *yillôd*: everywhere else it indicates habitual activity. Its meaning, then, is probably "discharger" or "spout."¹ "The name Gihon, derived from a verb meaning 'to burst' or 'bubble forth,' exactly suits the intermittent violent action of the Virgin's Spring, and may be compared with the Arabic *El-Fûwarah* [read *Fawwârah*], 'the Bubbler.'" The comparison with the Arabic *Jaihân* and *Jaihûn* rather suggests that Gihon was merely an old word for "river." Dr. Smith proceeds: "That it is called Gihon the Upper is of course due to the fact that in the Chronicler's day the water issuing from the end of the tunnel would be known as the lower Gihon. And in fact the connexion of Gihon with the *Shiloah* is from this time onwards a close one. The Targum gives *Shilloah* or *Shillôhâ* as an equivalent for Gihon, and both D. Kimchi and Rashi take them as identical." *Pace tanti viri* the arguments in this passage seem scarcely able to bear the conclusion. The mediaeval French Rabbis are merely *noughts* added to the decimal of the Targum: the Targum itself is here identical with the Peshittâ. Apparently, then, all that can be said is that the Aramaic version of the Old Testament in one place substitutes (or reads)

¹ I suspect that this word is connected with *سلح*, not like the other *שלח*, with *سوح*.

Siloah for Gihon—which is not quite the same as Dr. Smith's conclusion.

As between the two eminent topographers there seems on this point to be a drawn battle. Of so considerable a work as the Tunnel there ought to be some mention or reminiscence in the Old Testament; and this is to be found either in the account of Hezekiah's operations (2 Kings xx. 20), or nowhere. On the other hand, it is strange that the name by which the Tunnel designates itself (*nikbâh*) is not found in the Jewish record, and Mr. Merrill seems to be right in asserting that the word there used (*ṭ' 'âlâh*) does not mean tunnel, but aqueduct or channel.

Jesus Siracides (the real author, not the Cairene *Machwerk*) seems to interpret Hezekiah's work as a tunnelling operation (xlvi. 17), but calls the water *introduced into the midst* of the city "the Gog." The metre¹ shows that the word is correctly given in the Greek translation; since the suggestion that it is the Greek *ἀγωγός* (afterwards borrowed by the Aramaic dialects), though ingenious, seems to involve an anachronism, the work identified by this writer with Hezekiah's probably had that name in the former's time; it would be equivalent to "the Giant." The Chronicler (who was unknown to Jesus Siracides) apparently is unacquainted with this name, but has his own theory of the nature of the work, which need not be identical either with the Siracide's or with that intended by the author of the Kings. If therefore the position of the City of David is to be determined by that of Hezekiah's operations, it must remain uncertain.

The chapter in Dr. Smith's work which deals with the site of David's city certainly contains many arguments for the Ophel site that stand apart from the water question. Whether the reader be satisfied with his conclusions or

not, his history of the employment of the various names will be acknowledged to be masterly. The point at which the tradition is likely to have broken with regard to the location of David's city seems to be satisfactorily fixed, and due weight is given to the assertion of Josephus that levelling on a vast scale was carried out in Maccabaeian times. The statements which may evoke criticism seem to refer to points of minor importance. Such are some that concern the etymology of words. *Ophel* is identified, apparently without hesitation, with a medical term so indelicate in character that the Jews in reading the Bible substitute another for it wherever it occurs. It is not quite easy to suppose that the Jerusalemites called a part of their city by such a word. Perhaps, then, this *Ophel* should rather be identified with the Arabic *ghufl*, which means either no man's land, or land on which there are no buildings or marks. It is used in the Prophet's treaty with the people of Duma¹ and elsewhere.² But if this identification have any chance of being right, it suggests another for Sion, viz., from *ḡuwwah*, "a landmark." What strongly favours the latter etymology (which is not new) is that this word is actually used in Arabian place-names.³ The two names will then be opposed as "the little landmark" and "the empty space."

Dr. Smith's derivation is from an Arabic word *ḡahwah*, "protuberance," and implies that the Moslem name for the hill *Ṣahyaun* preserves a pre-historic tradition. The Moslems, however, doubtless get their name from the form used in the Peshittâ, *Ṣehyun*. The question, then, is whether the Syriac version preserves a vulgar form in use among the inhabitants, which might conceivably be

¹ Balâdhufî, ed. de Goeje, p. 61.

² Harîri, ed. de Sacy, p. 449 n.

³ Hamdâni's Geography, Index. For the use of the word see Abû Tammâm's Diwan, ed. 1, p. 58.

the original form of the name, or whether this transliteration is due to some other reason. The Syriac lexicographers tell us the word means "watchtower," and it seems that their statement is confirmed by the Arabic lexicographers, who give *ṣahwah* the meaning "a tower on the top of a hill," without, however, adducing any example, and noting the sense as "rare." This, then, makes it likely that the Syriac spelling is due to an *etymology*, like that of *R'ûth* for Ruth; and it has to be regarded in that case as a plausible conjecture without having any foundation in tradition. Plausible it certainly is; and if correct might help to settle the claims of the hills very much better than the modern etymologies. Of these some have to be struck out on philological grounds; notably one mentioned by Dr. Smith from a root *ṣwn*, to protect," of which the Hebrew form is *ṣfn*.

The arguments against the Ophel theory adduced by Mr. Merrill (p. 283 and elsewhere), are mainly based on the insufficiency of the space which it occupies for the size of the city as it appears in the Biblical narratives. We may transcribe a little more of his dialogue :—

What are we to say of Solomon's horsemen, horses and chariots ?

A. We suppose he had a great many, as would be perfectly natural for an Oriental monarch of wealth and power.

Is not the number mentioned altogether too great ?

A. Even if we allow that there were not as many as stated, they must have been very numerous, and a place where they could be kept must be provided.

Could a place have been provided for them on the Ophel ridge ?

A. We can assert that it would have been impossible.

If the Ophel ridge was Jerusalem, and Solomon's chariots and horses could not be kept there, other questions arise as :—(1) Where were they kept ? (2) Did Solomon never drive into his city ? (3) How far from the Ophel ridge did Solomon and his courtiers, or his queen and her attendants have to walk before they could enter their carriages when going on a pleasure drive ?

A. Such puzzling questions cannot be answered.

One might almost wish they had never been asked. Another page is next spent in sympathy with Solomon's queen, who "for twenty years of her married life" would have had to put up with "the noise of thousands of hammers and the confusion of a multitude of voices," while the king's great buildings were being constructed. It is pleasant to be able to reassure Mr. Merrill on this point, on the authority of 1 Kings vi. 7:—

Then towered the palace, then in awful state
The Temple reared its everlasting gate.
No workman steel, no ponderous axes rung:
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.

Even, therefore, if Solomon's queen passed her married life on Ophel, she was spared this form of annoyance.

We return to the regions of dignified common sense when we examine the way in which Dr. Smith deals with the difficulty of space. He properly compares the area furnished by Ophel with that occupied by Gezer, as shown by Mr. Macalister's excavations, and finds that the difference is not great. Such evidence as is at our disposal implies that the importance of the two cities in ancient times was about equal. This sort of reasoning will, to most readers, seem more scientific than the hypothetical needs of King Solomon's queen.

It is curious that each writer finds in the theory of the other a difficulty in the want of water. "The south-west hill," says Dr. Smith, "is waterless, and lies aloof from the ancient source or sources of water in the Kidron valley"; in reply to this we have the following dialogue:—

Had the city (i.e., Ophel) a water supply?

A. So far as is known, it had not an ample supply in the way of cisterns. And if the Pool of Siloam then existed, every person from the city attempting to bring water thence would be killed. and this, from the nature of the ground, would be far more certain to be the fate of those attempting to bring water from the Fountain of the Virgin.

To make the rejoinder complete it should be added that Dr. Smith notices the want of cisterns on the South-west hill: "the rock cisterns are few compared with those of other parts of Jerusalem."

On one point there is more agreement, viz., the ease with which Ophel could be attacked from the north. Against this difficulty Dr. Smith urges the opinion of the eminent military engineers Wilson and Warren, who considered it was not insuperable. The laity will not in most cases be disposed to question their judgment on such a point.

Finally a word should be said about Mr. Merrill's theory of Ophel, to which he devotes some pages. Dr. Smith makes Ophel synonymous with Sion, and is on the whole in favour of the view that when the name Sion was removed from the part of the East hill below the Temple and applied to the Temple Mount, Ophel succeeded it in its narrower designation. Mr. Merrill makes Ophel merely a tower, originally "an adjunct to the Royal Palace, erected for the pleasure of those who lived in it, and as a public ornament as well." According to this it is incorrect to apply the term Ophel to the whole of the ridge which Dr. Smith supposes to have been the site of David's city; and it must be confessed that in 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 14 Ophel is very clearly distinguished from David's city.

To answer the question, then, with which we started—is anything now certainly known about the topography of ancient Jerusalem?—it must be admitted that there is small room for positive assertion. Research and excavation have unearthed but little in the way of sure means for identifying sites. Even the famous Siloam inscription is rightly described by Mr. Merrill as "a silent kind of inscription, omitting everything we want to know about." The place-names are ordinarily obscure, and even when a plausible etymology can be given them, it conveys little

information ; any fountain might be called a " discharger," almost any hill " a tumour." It is a fairly, yet not perfectly safe rule to suppose, unless there is distinct authority for the contrary, that each place has only one name. It is therefore surprising that neither of our topographers pays much attention to this canon. Dr. Smith does not argue " because a body of water was called Siloah, therefore it was not called Gihon " : but is satisfied with the identification of the two by an anonymous Targum, of uncertain date and place. Mr Merrill similarly writes, " It is certain that fort, castle, stronghold, City of David, Zion, Millo, all refer to one and the same thing, to one and the same place. This stronghold was pretty much all there was of Jerusalem." Similarly a Rabbi once explained that Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, and Artaxerxes all meant the same person. Cuneiform inscriptions and papyri have shown him to be mistaken. Perhaps they may perform a similar service to Millo, Ophel, Zion, and the City of David.

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(To be concluded.)