

AENON NEAR TO SÂLIM

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In an article entitled "The Baptism of John—Where Was It?" published in *The Biblical World* for July, 1907, I endeavored to show that Synoptic tradition on this question in its ultimate form is in harmony with the data of Josephus, and points to the region of Peraea, southward of the modern town of Es-Salt, as that principally affected by the Baptist's activity. It is true that this is not "the wilderness of Judaea," immemorial haunt of the world-fleeing anchorite, as well as of the outlaw and freebooter. Baptisms "in Jordan" are equally impossible from "the wilderness of Judaea," which is not contiguous to it, and from the high plateau of Peraea, where Furrer would locate "Bethany beyond Jordan" of John 1:28. But the Peraean plateau, which southward of Batneh breaks down toward the Jordan in a vast amphitheater of foothills, extending almost to Madeba in Moab, has at least this advantage over "the wilderness of Judaea" as a possible scene of the Baptist's activity, that the gathering of multitudes here would not only be much easier, but much more likely to provoke the intervention of Antipas, than similar gatherings in the jurisdiction of his arch-enemy Pilate. Indeed we can hardly think of the arrest of John under the circumstances related by Josephus, and his imprisonment in Machaerus, a fortress on the extreme southern frontier of Antipas' Peraean dominions, unless the region affected was really Peraea. Thus the statement of the Fourth Gospel that "the place where John was baptizing at the first" was "in Bethany beyond Jordan," in a locality later described as "the village of Mary and Martha" (John 1:28; 3:26; 10:40; cf. Luke 10:38-42), is in substance confirmed. Such a "Bethany" is indeed unknown, for Furrer himself is unable to make the philological transition from "Bethany" to Batneh without the supposition of "assimilation to the Judaeian Bethany." Still we have some reason to regard the

Johannine tradition of the *region concerned* as a valuable supplement, not to say a correction, of the Synoptic "wilderness of Judaea."

What then can be said of the Fourth Evangelist's remarkable reference to a subsequent activity of the Baptist "in Aenon near to Sâlim?"

Many data of the Fourth Gospel are regarded with the suspicion, well or ill-founded, of being adapted to the evangelist's didactic purpose. That this writer sometimes attaches a profound symbolical significance even to names of localities is apparent from his rendering of the name "Siloam" in 9:7. But in 3:23 there is no indication of symbolism. It would be extravagant and far-fetched to suppose that the name and description of the place where John was baptizing at the time of the alleged controversy between his disciples and disciples of Jesus¹ in Judaea, have any significance other than the plain geographical one. There is no reason to assign them to any other derivation than a more or less accurate and trustworthy local tradition. Followers of the Baptist at Aenon near to Sâlim, a place where John was reputed, himself, to have baptized "because there were many waters there," were provoked to jealousy by the great following obtained by those who practiced the Baptism of Jesus in "the land of Judaea." There should be all the less dispute as to the evangelist's plain matter-of-fact intention in these geographical data from the fact that within the limit of the next few verses (4:3-6) he gives further tangible and concrete data, which are not only verifiable by the modern geographer, but suffice in the present writer's judgment to prove the evangelist's personal familiarity with the scenes described.² On the other hand the nature of his composition is such, so sovereign in its disregard of the mere externals of actual history, that we can attach no authority whatever to its implications of time or event, so as to place the Baptist's activity in "Aenon near to Sâlim" in a period

¹ The question has been raised whether the "questioning of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying," in John 3:25, represents the original text: because the context has nothing to say about rivalry between the followers of John and of the synagogue authorities, but only between John's disciples and adherents of the church. Hence the conjecture of O. Holtzmann (*Kommentar*) and Baldensperger (*Prolog des vierten Evangeliums*, p. 66) of τῶν, or τοῦ Ἰησοῦ instead of Ἰουδαίου, which would give the sense required. Without raising the question of text, however, we may accept this sense as the general sense of the context. The "Jew" is not interested for the purifications of his Judaism but for those of Christianity.

² Cf., e.g., "this mountain," vss. 20 f.

subsequent to the Peraean and coincident with an activity of Jesus' disciples in "the land of Judaea." We cannot even be sure of the representation that the Baptist in person ever baptized in Aenon at all, or did transfer his activities from south to north after the manner the same evangelist attributes to Jesus. The most that can be set down as a postulate likely to be granted by all schools of criticism and interpretation is, (1) that about 100 A. D. there *was* a place known as "Aenon near to Sâlim," where there were "many waters," (2) that the locality at that period was probably a seat of the sect who still adhered to the Baptist, and (3) that it was then regarded, whether justly or unjustly, as one of the baptizing places of John himself. Can we identify the spot our Fourth Evangelist intends?

To the present writer it has seemed somewhat significant that such geographical acquaintance with Palestine as our Fourth Evangelist displays is confined to Jerusalem and a series of localities on the great high-road northward to the upper end of the Sea of Galilee, a route still marked by frequent traces of the old Roman highway. Even "Bethany beyond Jordan" is not an exception. Of course if we read "Bethabara," with the later manuscripts, the spot will lie almost directly on this route where it debouches from the hills of Samaria into the broad rolling plain of the Jordan, southeast of Beisan. But even if, with the better authorities, we read "Bethany," and locate the spot in Peraea, the rule remains; for the evangelist displays no personal acquaintance with this locality. On the contrary it may well be that there never was a place of just this name in Peraea, and that the difficulties surrounding it are due only to the Fourth Evangelist's confusion of the "Bethany" which he knows from the Synoptists as "near Jerusalem" with "the village of Martha and Mary" which he knows from Luke 10: 38-42 to have been in Peraea. At least the transition in John 11: 1 from one Bethany to the other, one in the region where Jesus is entertained by Martha and Mary, the other "the village of Mary and her sister Martha" where Jesus is again the guest of honor, has points of curious coincidence.

In the remaining cases, where acquaintance is really shown with features of the country, it is always such as might be easily obtained after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. The places and objects are uniformly such as might still be shown undisturbed by the disasters

of the great war, and especially such as would be most apt to be pointed out to a traveler interested in biblical story and confined, save for slight deviations, to the great northward highway.

In Jerusalem, ruined as it was, one could still see traces of "the treasury" and "Solomon's porch" in the temple area. One could also see, no doubt, the locality at least of the "house of Caiaphas" and "the praetorium." The "pavement called Gabbatha" where Pilate's judgment seat had been set up was surely not undiscoverable, and it would be easy to identify the "Pool of Siloam" and the "Pool of Bethesda" with its "five colonnades."³ Pools and pavements survive even the worst ravages of siege and fire. As subsequent history has shown, however, the superstitious tales attaching to pools are easily transferred. We need not be surprised, then, if in the period of the Fourth Gospel the tradition about the healing angel troubling the waters had already become attached to the pool by the sheep (gate?) instead of Gihon or Siloam with their intermittent flow. The "brook Kidron," the "garden" beyond it, Bethany "about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem," its "cave with a stone laid against it" from which the dead had come forth at Jesus' command, Golgotha, the "place called the place of a skull," and the garden tomb in a place "nigh at hand" where "visions of angels" had pointed to the visible tokens of the resurrection—these are all localities such as *could* be pointed out after the great war, and such as visiting Christians would wish to be shown. Who can believe that the church which, as Eusebius tells us, "gathered again to Jerusalem from all directions"⁴ after the destruction of the city by Titus, would not point out all these sacred spots to the believing traveler?

But when the scenes of Jerusalem are left behind for those of Galilee, our evangelist seems to have no thought of the historic road by Jericho. His idea seems to be that going from Judaea to Galilee one "must needs pass through Samaria." The expression is natural after

³ Advocates of a date for the Fourth Gospel not only earlier by a full generation than the utmost demands of ancient tradition, but earlier even than the Synoptic Gospels, have pointed to the present tense of the verb in John 5:2: "Now there *is* in Jerusalem a pool by the sheep (gate?)." The phenomenon is really noteworthy. Only the inference that the destruction by Titus had not yet occurred is incorrect. The pool *is* there now, and *is* still shown.

⁴ *H. E.* III, xi, 1.

the old quarrels which formerly had made Samaria forbidden ground to the Jew (Matt. 10:5) had been quelled by Roman power; it is harder to explain in a contemporary.

The Galilean places whose situation is actually known to our evangelist are "Cana," the city of Nathaniel (both names peculiar to the Fourth Gospel and playing an important part in it)—"Cana" from which one passes "down" to "Capernaum" on the shore of the lake, "Capernaum" whence boats ply "unto Tiberias," nigh unto "the place where they did eat the bread after the Lord had given thanks," and "Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Philip." These are in fact the only Galilean place-names save Nazareth of which he makes mention at all. And these all are on the beaten track of pilgrimage to this day. But to return to Jerusalem, for it is from Jerusalem our traveler will have taken his departure, if, as we conjecture, he aimed to visit the scenes of Galilee and Judaea already sacred to gospel story. One passes then first, far on the right, the "city called Ephraim, in the country near to the wilderness," perhaps Et-Tayyibeh. It was already distinguished by the tradition of a stay of Jesus there. Next one comes to localities made sacred by Old Testament story, "the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph," the splendid, fruitful plain at the foot of Gerizim, "this mountain" where the Samaritans were still worshiping and their fathers had worshiped before them; though in our evangelist's time great inroads had been made upon the ancestral faith, first by Simon Magus, a reputed disciple of John the Baptist, and later by Philip, the Hellenistic evangelist. The high-road does not enter "the city of the Samaritans," Flavia Neapolis, for that lies off to the west, in the pass between Gerizim and Ebal, on the road to Caesarea. If one is going to Galilee one remains below on the plain, skirting the eastern foot of Ebal. "Now Jacob's well was there" with its low curb and "deep" waters below, inviting the weary traveler to noontide rest, perhaps to a meal procured from the "city" just over the ridge, or perhaps from the "city" Sychar. This is usually identified with the modern 'Askar, a village close by nestling at the foot of Ebal, northward, on the road itself, but not a stopping place for travelers who would take their noonday meal at the well.

There, too, less than an hour's walk to the eastward⁵ across the sloping plain, and plainly visible from the heights, is Sâlim, another

Old Testament site—at least for those who read the Greek Bible which told how Jacob, coming with his flocks and herds from Succoth, in the Jordan valley, on his way to Shechem (Nablous) “came to Salem, a city of the Shechemites,”⁶ and bought the famous “parcel of ground.” “In the Samaritan Chronicle it is called Salem the Great, and the Samaritans understand it to be mentioned in Gen. 33:18.”⁷

Here is the great cross-roads of Samaria. The direct road to Gil-ead crossing Jordan at the famous ford of Damieh (Adam, Jos. 3:16) marked today by the telegraph line from Nablous to Salt, passes near Sâlim to enter beyond by a steep descent the splendid valley Wady Beidân, whose stream, rising at Râs el-Fârâh, some two miles north of Sychar, is the principal affluent of the Jordan from the west. The direct road eastward thus cuts off the mountain mass of Neby Belân, which rises nearly two thousand feet above the plain, but the watershed follows the valley northeastward between Ebal and Neby Belân, and only turns to the southeast after it has skirted the foot of Neby Belân, and received the copious flow of the great springs of El-Fârâh.⁸

Here we must pause, for we have reached what has been called the greatest geographical puzzle of the New Testament. Where was “Aenon near to Sâlim”?

The northward road from the plain of Shechem follows the curving descent of the great valley just described, which starts between Ebal and Neby Belân. As one enters it, just after leaving Sychar, and

⁵ Two and one-half miles due east from Jacob's Well. The Palestine Exploration Fund *Memoirs* describe Sâlim as “a small village resembling the rest, but evidently ancient, having rock-cut tombs, cisterns, and a tank. Olive trees surround it; on the north are two springs about three-quarters of a mile from the village.”

⁶ Gen 33:18 (LXX). In the *Onomasticon* Jerome employs this phrase from the Vulgate (which here agrees with the LXX) “Salem, civitas Sichimorum” to distinguish this place, which he identifies with Shechem itself, from two other Salems, one near Jerusalem, the other near Scythopolis.

⁷ *Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*, II, 230. Gen. 33:18 is the passage above cited. In the Massoretic text which represents the Palestinian tradition, intensely hostile to Samaritan sacred sites, the single letter corresponding to the word “to” is suppressed, giving “came *salem*,” which the R. V. (text) renders “came in peace.”

⁸ The name contains, as G. A. Smith points out, the same radicals as the O. T. Pirâthon (Judg. 12:13-15). He sees in “the name Tammûn, so common now at the head of the Wady Fârâh” the *θαμναθα φαραθωνι* of I Macc. 9:50.—*Hist. Geogr.*, p. 355, n. 1.

at about an equal distance from Sâlim and Jacob's Well, one sees directly in front the bold outline of a Crusading tower, the Burj el-Fâr'ah, commanding the head of the rich valley which, formed here by the junction of two magnificent streams springing respectively from the northern and southern slopes of a low mountain promontory, slopes gradually down to the Jordan. This great gateway from the east into



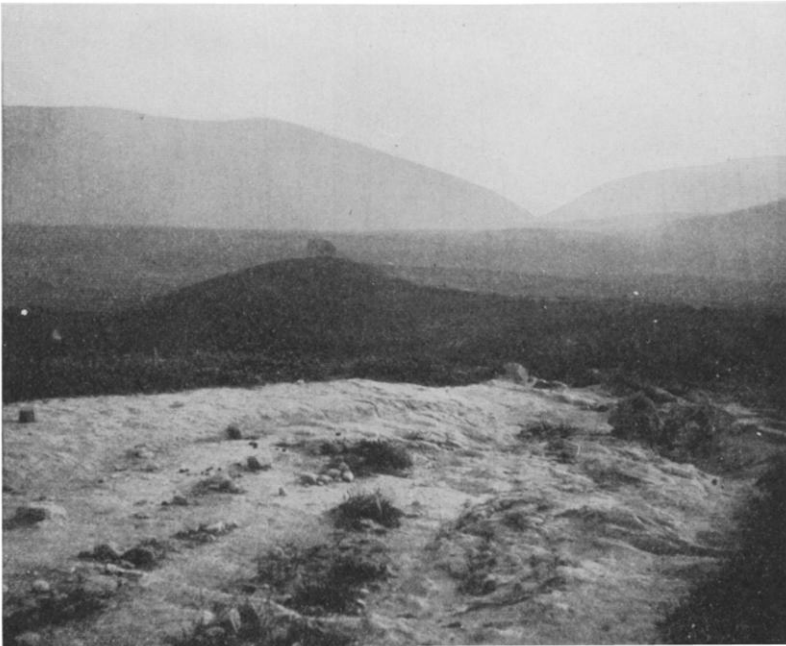
BURJ EL-FAR'AH FROM THE ROAD TO 'ASKAR

the heart of Samaria is known as the Wady Beidân. Its entrance was guarded in the days of the Herods from the incursion of the nomads not only by strong fortresses east of Jordan, but in the Jordan valley itself by the flourishing Greek towns of Phasaelis and Archelais. Its present appearance is well described by a modern traveler:

It is a narrow, deep valley, flanked by parallel mountain ranges, running at first due southeast, then more to the south, till it reaches the Ghôr. The distance from the northern headsprings at Burj el-Fâr'ah to the Jordan, following the general line of its course, is about twenty miles. The stream itself is a slender thread banked by bluffs, steep, but grassy and not precipitous; at several points I judged

them one hundred feet high or more. Above them the valley expands to the width of from one to two miles. The opposite ridges of the two mountain ranges are stated by Conder to be about four miles apart. In this extensive tract, though fertile and well watered, there is not a single village. It is held by the Mesaʿayd, a tribe of nomadic Arabs.⁹

The reason why there are no villages in the valley but only on the hillsides is not far to seek. As our traveler remarks,



BURJ EL-FARḤAH FROM THE NORTHEAST

In biblical history this valley is known only as a thoroughfare. It was up this valley that Jacob drove his flocks and herds from Succoth to Salem near Shechem. It was along the banks of its stream that the "garments and vessels" of Benhadad were strewn as far as Jordan.¹⁰

The case is similar in the Jordan valley below. The open plain was too exposed to attack from Bedouin marauders. From the time that the defenses east of Jordan were broken down, when Archelais

⁹ Professor Wm. Arnold Stevens on "Aenon near to Sâlim" in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, III (1883), 134.

¹⁰ Stevens, *ibid.*, quoting Conder, *Tent Work*, I, 91.

and Phasaelis were abandoned, and even the Crusaders' Tower fell into ruin, villages have been compelled to retire to the more easily defended mountain heights. Such is the case with ʿAinûn, a ruined village, "apparently modern, standing on a small hillock"¹¹ among the hills some five miles northeast of the springs of El-Fârʿah. Its name ("Springs") is seemingly its only relic of antiquity and is singularly inappropriate to its present position "without a drop of water."¹² But in the opinion of not a few its original location was such as its name implies, below in the rich valley, most probably at the very spot where the Râs el-Fârʿah springs unite with those of the northern fork. Such a position would well befit "Aenon" where there were "many waters." And it would also be "near to Sâlim;" for Sâlim lies less than an hour's walk to the south, around the base of Neby Belân. Well does the present writer recall tenting among the oleanders beside these "many waters;" but we cannot improve upon the description long since given by Professor W. A. Stevens, though it would seem unknown to recent geographers:

Wady Beidân at its beginning is a deep slit in the limestone strata between Ebal and Neby Belân; in the rainy season it drains the plain between Jacob's Well and Sâlim, but most of the year is a dry gully. Starting from the springs called Râs el-Fârʿah, it is about two miles in length, running almost due east till it joins the northern branch of the Fârʿah. The writer's entrance into the valley was from the village of ʿAskar, where he had encamped the previous day, April 20. The path follows nearly the ancient road to Damascus, via Scythopolis and Gadara. It skirts the base of Mount Ebal, a little above the level of the plain of Sâlim, and, in the course of half an hour's riding, descends rapidly alongside of the gully. Our guide, a man from ʿAskar, called the gully Wady Ibrîd. It is the southernmost branchlet of the Wady Beidân, which latter name the men of whom we made inquiry applied only to the lower portion, where the water supply is perennial. . . . In less than an hour after leaving ʿAin ʿAskar we are at ʿAin es Subrân, the southernmost of the large springs that feed the Fârʿah. Turning now a little to the left, in a few minutes more we descend abruptly into another ravine, at the foot of the Mt. Ebal group. Here we are at the proper beginning of the Wady Beidân—the Râs el-Fârʿah springs, which feed with perennial abundance the southern fork of the Fârʿah stream. Fountains are bursting forth from the rocks on either side, and a mountain brook is plunging downward in cascades and broken streams to the lower bed of the Wady. The road, instead of following the water-course, crosses it, and, continuing north-

¹¹ *Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*, II, 234.

¹² Robinson, *Researches*, III, 333.

ward toward Tûbâs, traverses the triangular terrace which separates the two branches of the Fârâh.

The description of the "rocky glen of fountains" which follows is beautiful in itself and well supports the claim that "no other spot in Palestine, south of the sources of the Jordan at Bâniâs or Tell el-Kâdy, so well deserves the name of 'The Springs.'" We can, however, do no more than transcribe a few of its data. The "numberless



WADY FARÂH, LOOKING DOWN TOWARD THE GHOR

springs within the space of half a mile" supply four overshot mills within a few rods of one another, besides others lower down, irrigate innumerable gardens, and fill many pools, in the largest of which near the upper end of the glen the water reached to the armpits. The springs of the northern branch are scarcely less copious than these.

Why, then, seeing there is no other place named Aenon in Palestine save Beit ʿAinûn near Hebron, "which has no very fine supply of water and no Salem near it,"¹³ should we not regard the springs of El Fârâh as meeting the conditions above defined (p. 225) ?

Those objections which to Professor Sanday in his *Sacred Sites*¹⁴ seem most formidable are based upon the assumption (already shown to be dubious) that the name ʿAinûn cannot have shifted its position from the valley to the hilltop on its northern slope.

ʿAinûn is about seven miles as the crow flies from Sâlim, with two considerable ridges intervening; it would be much more by the track that does duty for a road; so that it would be strange if it were described as "near to Sâlim;" and strange also that ruins on the top of a hill should mark a spot where "there was much water." "Here is precisely the name ʿAenon; but unfortunately there is no Sâlim near, nor a drop of water," is Dr. Robinson's summary verdict.

The objection is sometimes reinforced by the suggestion that were Râs el-Fârʿah the true Aenon, it would have been described as near to Flavia Neapolis or some important place, rather than "near to Sâlim." But our evangelist's interests are not those of the geographer, but of the antiquarian, or more strictly the pilgrim. It is not the big new cities of the gentiles which to him are important, but the "sacred sites," in particular those he had himself passed through. One need only survey his characterizations above (p. 226), "the place where they ate the loaves," "the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph," "the village of Mary and Martha," to see what sort of locality he would naturally refer to. Moreover, if our theory is correct, he had not even seen Neapolis, but had passed on over the straight road between ʿAskar and Sâlim, both of which he does mention. If Aenon in his time was really at "The Springs" it was nearer to Sâlim than to any other place of note, and in plain sight from the road but a little way beyond Jacob's well.¹⁵

Again it is said¹⁶ to be insupposable that John should have baptized in Samaria and particularly that this should have been the scene of his labors in the period just before his arrest. But this is not our supposition. It is on the contrary not only possible, but made

¹³ Conder, *Tent Work*, i, p. 92. The name ʿAinûn is justified here by the fact that "there are twelve small springs about Hebron" (G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geogr.*, p. 78, note), a great rarity in Judah.

¹⁴ P. 34.

¹⁵ The objection raised by Professor T. K. Cheyne, cf. *s.v.* "Sâlim" in *Enc. Bibl.* "The distance of the springs from Sâlim (about seven miles), is rather against this identification," is based on misapprehension. The *springs* are not more than two miles from Sâlim.

independently probable by the representations of the Clementine writings, which make both the Samaritan arch-heretics, Dositheus and Simon Magus, disciples of John the Baptist, and by later traditions which make Samaria itself the place of John's burial, that the Johannine *movement* extended to Samaria, so that in about 100 A. D. those who baptized in the name of Jesus "in the country of Judaea" might well look askance at some in Samaria, who, like those whom Paul found in Ephesus,¹⁷ "knew only the baptism of John." Those in Samaria conversely who "baptized in Aenon near to Sâlim because there were many waters there," and doubtless held that John himself had done so, would be full of jealousy of him who had been "with John beyond Jordan" and was now "increasing" while they "decreased."¹⁸

But we are told that

both Eusebius and Jerome expressly place Aenon and Sâlim in the Jordan valley eight Roman miles south of Scythopolis (*Beisân*), and the two sites were certainly shown here in the fourth century.¹⁹

Fortunately we have the contemporary description of a visit to these sites by the pilgrim Silvia. Her description explains just why this was so. The special object of interest at this locality in the Ghôr was a ruin designated "the palace of Melchizedek." Pilgrims to this spot were interested, it would seem, not primarily in New Testament sites, but in the story of Gen. 14, as elaborated in Ps. 110 and Heb. 7. This is apparent from Silvia's story. Nobody offered to show her the springs of Aenon, but "*Remembering* that St. John was said to have baptized in Aenon near to Sâlim *she asked* the presbyter in charge how far it was," and thereupon was shown "two hundred paces off" "a very pleasant orchard" called "the garden of St. John" with "a spring of water very good and pure which sent forth a full stream in one jet;" also "in front of the spring a sort of basin in which

¹⁶ So B. Weiss, *Leben Jesu*, Vol. II, p. 408, note.

¹⁷ Acts 19: 1 ff.

¹⁸ We cannot here undertake to interpret the dialogue at Jacob's Well, which in the Fourth Gospel takes the place of the Synoptic story of the Canaanitish woman to prove the wider outlook of Jesus. Luke alone takes a similar interest in Samaritan Christianity. But the whole scene with its allusions to Samaria's share in the great past of Israel, and its transparent references to a work of Jesus' disciples "entering into the labors" of these earlier sowers, a work more fruitful than on the thankless soil of Judaea, should be read in the light of Acts 8: 4-25.

¹⁹ Sanday, *Sacred Sites*, p. 34.

it appeared that St. John had baptized.” Obviously Silvia was not the first who after having been shown the “Salem” of which Melchizedek had been king²⁰ had asked “And what about ‘Aenon near to Sâlim?’” And *of course* they were shown it. No rule is so absolute in that land of pilgrimage as the rule that the pilgrim *must* be shown what he asks for. Had it been possible to find a spring nearer than “two hundred paces off” the complaisance of local piety would surely have supplied it. But Silvia has no reason to complain that pilgrims are unduly inconvenienced when the holy presbyter conducts her “two hundred paces” down a delightful valley called the garden of St. John, where pious forethought had even supplied “a sort of basin, in which it appeared that St. John had baptized.”

As Sir Charles Wilson has said,²¹ the springs in the Jordan valley, about seven and a half miles south-southeast of Beisân called Umm el-*c*Amdân mark “almost certainly the spot indicated by Eusebius and Jerome.” It is even possible that the wely of *Sheikh Sâlim* on the mound *Tell Ridhghah* “three quarters of a mile to the north” may be a lingering ghost of the fourth-century tradition, which had identified the spot as “Aenon near to Sâlim,” though the present writer’s inquiries on the spot failed to elicit any name resembling either Aenon or Sâlim.²² But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the whole tradition is that even the inquiries of Silvia herself, with all their naïve appetite for pious identifications, *failed* to elicit the name Sâlim she was so desirous to find. “She was shown the city of Melchizedek, formerly called Salem, but then ‘*corruptly Sedima.*’” So in the century of Eusebius, Jerome, and Silvia, when they were trying to identify this site as “Aenon near to Salem” they really *had no trace of either one of the names in question*, and were depending solely on a

²⁰ Gen. 14:18.

²¹ Smith’s *Dict. of the Bible*, 2d ed., s.v. “Aenon.”

²² Lagrange in the *Revue Biblique* for 1895, p. 503–10, reports ruins corresponding to Silvia’s description of the basin and copious spring, at Umm el-*c*Amdân (= Sedima?). He would regard Aenon (from the Aramaic ‘ainawan = “springs”) as a mere appellation of the group of springs, it having wholly disappeared as a name from this region. The names now attaching to the springs are El Fatûr, Ed-Deir (= “the monastery”), and El-Beda. The name Sâlim he would find in a conspicuous tell, four miles north of Umm el-*c*Amdân, between it and Beisan, and nearer the latter. It bears the name Tell Sarem which might be a corruption of Salem. If this was the site of “Mechizedek’s palace” Silvia’s description is misleading.

ruin known to tradition as "the palace of Melchizedek," at a place known as *Sedima*, with some adjacent springs. Aenon has never been claimed in this region as a local name. Salem, so far as it has any local attachment, might be a mere creation of the fourth century A. D.

In reality any person who has visited this site uninfluenced by the fanciful identifications of the fourth-century shrine-builders, must realize the absurdity of locating at *this* spot "Aenon near to Sâlim, where John baptized because there were many waters there." The springs are mere rivulets, the best of which, in Silvia's day, had to be provided with "a sort of basin" to make it "appear" that St. John had baptized there. *And a little over a mile away is the Jordan itself* with its sweeping floods! Is it natural for a writer to explain that the reason John was baptizing in Aenon near to Sâlim was that "there were many waters there," if he referred to a group of seven springs "all lying within a radius of a quarter of a mile" none of which gives a stream even ankle-deep, while within a few minutes' walk is the broad deep flow of the Jordan itself? Any number of "basins" will not make the modern traveler who has visited the spot believe that if John ever did any baptizing in this region he did not do it, as the Synop-tists say, "in the Jordan."

If then we may dismiss this fourth-century creation, in spite of its formidable list of modern advocates, there remains but one serious rival to the Samaritan claimant to the name "Aenon near to Sâlim." This, curiously enough, is another Fâr'ah, though with no adjacent ʿAinûn, and only a somewhat remote Wady Suleîm to represent the latter locality. ʿAin Fâr'ah in Benjamin is a wild gorge an hour's ride eastward of ʿAnâta (Anathoth) the birthplace of Jeremiah. Its perennial spring breaks out at the head of a deep canon or gorge whose perpendicular sides have been for ages the abode of monastic cliff-dwellers. In still remoter times Canaanitish rites will have been celebrated in this romantic mountain glen, for underneath the beetling precipice on the southern side of the cañon a huge boulder, some 30 feet in height and diameter, fallen from the cliff into the stream below, has been rudely fashioned into the shape of a ziggurât, its upper, nearly horizontal surface containing two huge cup-holes side by side, each some 18 inches in diameter and some 12 deep. Further down, where the brawling stream widens into a tiny pool, a deep niche of Greek

pattern has been cut into the face of an over-hanging rock, reproducing on smaller and simpler scale the famous niches at the springs of Banias. ʿAin Fârʿah is the ideal spot for such an anchorite as the Baptist—so long as he lived merely his hermit life and avoided the multitudes instead of baptizing them.

With some difficulty one or two of the pools might be enlarged or deepened enough to admit of the simultaneous baptism of two or three



CANAANITE ALTAR (?) WITH TWIN CUP-HOLES AT ʿAIN FARʿAH

persons, but it is difficult to imagine great multitudes assembling in this narrow cañon; and as for the names “Aenon” and “Salem” there is no pretense that the former ever attached to this single stream, while the latter attaches not at all to this wady, but is vaguely connected with one of the gulleys some miles to the south on the eastward slope of the Mount of Olives. Possibly there may have been a Salem in New Testament times on the Mount of Olives, but to describe ʿAin Fârʿah of Benjamin as “near to Salem,” with Jerusalem itself scarcely

out of sight over the ridge, would be like describing Mount Vernon in Westchester County, N. Y., as "near Hoboken."

The fanciful attempt to connect Aenon near to Sâlim with 'Ain Kârim,²³ the modern village close to Jerusalem on the southwest, which claims to be the birthplace of the Baptist, and has a good spring, not too copious, however, for a two-inch iron pipe at the village fountain, rests wholly upon the conjectural reading of *ἱεροσαλήμ* for *τοῦ σαλήμ*, and would not come into consideration at all but for the honored name of its distinguished author.

To sum up, we may well take pains to avoid the too sophomoric confidence of Macmillan's *Guide to Palestine*, so justly rebuked by Professor Sanday. This writer has managed to aggregate an unusual number of misstatements within the compass of the following two brief sentences:

On the north side of Wady Fâr'ah (? Beidan) stands an old (?) ruined site called 'Ainun, and undoubtedly marking the site (!) of Aenon, mentioned by St. John with Sâlim. . . . Here then we have one of the few absolute certainties (!) of sacred spots in Palestine: and it was undoubtedly at these headwaters of the Wady Fâr'ah that the Baptist was exercising his functions when he was taken prisoner by Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas would have invited more gratuitous trouble than was apt to be sought by "that fox" if he had attempted to make prisoner of John, amid a multitude gathered in the heart of Samaria, in the jurisdiction of his arch-enemy Pilate. It is difficult enough to admit that John ever entered Samaria at all, though we will not assert it to be impossible. What does seem reasonable to assert with some positiveness is that the absence of the two names Aenon and Sâlim from any other region of Palestine, and their occurrence here in reasonable proximity, in a region marked in high degree by the physical conditions required by the narrative, ought to determine for us the probable intention of the Fourth Evangelist. They should lead us to consider, pending further investigation, that *at his time of writing* the upper waters of the Wady Beidân were a resort of members of the Johannine sect, and *were then regarded* as having served the Baptist himself as a place for baptizing.

²³ *Enc. Bibl.*, s.v. "Salim."