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*THE ORACLES OF THE DISCOURSE AT JACOB'S  
WELL.*

THE graphic picture of the discourse by Jacob's well is one of the most fascinating scenes in the four Gospels. We are made to see the well-mouth, one of the few undisputed Biblical sites in the Holy Land, the patriarch's own spring, with the cornfields on the east, soon to whiten to harvest, the steep tufted mountains, Ebal to the north-west, Gerizim to the south-west, guarding the pass towards the vine-growing valley that winds down to the Mediterranean Sea. Beyond those cornfields are the hills that drain their waters west, north, and east into the Wâdy Fârah which bears them to the concealed trough of Jordan.

The persons and the dialogues are hardly less graphic. But on closer inspection we come to see that the latter are not without an allegorical sense which intensifies their interest from the historical point of view. While the religious teaching of the chapter has an interest that it can never lose, this historical and critical background also deserves a study of its own.

It has been pointed out by Professor Bacon (*The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*) that the woman of Samaria speaks allegorically when she says *I have no husband*. She says what Samaria itself would say—in exact contrast to what Isaiah says of Judah, *Thy Maker is thy husband* (Isa. liv. 5 Heb.). The position of this passage in Isaiah is to be noted, because we shall presently see that the context of it will furnish other remarkable references in the Lord's discourse with the woman. These have not been mentioned by Professor Bacon, and they seem to me to furnish abundant justification for his remark and to illustrate it. He has drawn attention to the fact that

the narrative in 2 Kings xvii. 24 ff. has suggested the idea of *thou hast had five husbands*. "And the king of Assyria brought men from (1) Babylon, and from (2) Cuthah, and from (3) Avvah, and from (4) Hamath, and (5) Sepharvaim . . . and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof. . . . They feared not the Lord. . . . Every nation made gods of their own. . . . The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of *Hamath* made *Ashima*, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim. . . . They feared the Lord and served their own gods. . . . Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord. . . . So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images." This tangled and self-contradictory account of the origin and course of the Samaritan false worship was at any rate the Scriptural basis of the hatred of the Jews for the Samaritans which was expressed in the scriptural language habitual to the prophets (Jer. iii. 20, Ezek. xvi. 32, Hosea ii. 7, Joel i. 8) by *Thou hast had five husbands*, as also by the words of Jesus *Ye worship ye know not what*. For it is certain that the barbarous idolatry of Succoth-benoth, etc., in the seventh century B.C. had prepared the bitter enmity of Sanballat in the fifth, and had left its deep impression on the character of the people down to A.D. To this day the inhabitants are "fanatical, turbulent, and quarrelsome," though at Nâblus itself the Church Missionary Society, by its admirable hospital and medical mission with an English physician, has made for some years past a noble and partly successful effort to soften the ferocity of Islam.

There is an interesting sequel to the scriptural reference to one of the false gods mentioned above as *Ashima*, in

Greek (A) *Asimath*. For in Tobit iii. 8 we read that in Ecbatane in Media Sara daughter of Raguel "had been given in marriage to seven husbands and (it was said that) *Asmodeus* the evil demon slew them before they lived with her. And they said: [Thou art not meet to be called Sara, but *Zara* (trouble)]. Dost thou not know that thou hast strangled thy husbands? *Thou hast had* (ἔσχεσ) already seven *husbands*, neither wast thou named after any of them." Now this *Asmodeus*, by its letters *asmad*, can be identified at once with *Asimath* the false deity. This identity can be checked by the place-names connected with either. For Ecbatana where Sara lived has Hamadān as its modern equivalent, and this name is *Hamath*, the colonists from which made *Asimath* their god or goddess.<sup>1</sup> The question (Mark xii. 21, Luke xx. 31) concerning the woman who had *had seven husbands who left no children* is partly based upon this Sara.

There is one other point of interest before we leave this part of the subject. *He whom thou now hast* is sufficiently precise on one side, that of the allegory: Samaria *did not fear the Lord* with the true worship (2 Kings xvii.), and so had not found her true husband. So says Sara (according to the Latin Vulgate, which was translated from a MS. now lost): "Because perhaps thou hast kept me for another man" (Tobit iii. 15). This has remarkable significance when the case of Sara is combined with that of Samaria. We may also infer that by some Jews the name Samaria was thought to be spelt Sara for short. But on the other

<sup>1</sup> The article *Hamath* in *E. Biblica* does not assert the contrary, for we certainly need not suppose that Hamath in Syria was the only Hamath. This name, meaning "enclosed or guarded place," would be one of the commonest names, as ubiquitous as *Ramah*; and the author of 2 Kings xvii. would naturally have written it down for any name at all similar to it, if indeed it was not the actual name before him. Dr. Cheyne in the same article identifies Ashima with Ishtar, Venus, which is just appropriate to the reproach in Tobit.

side, that of supposed reality, it is vague, for if the woman had had five husbands (*ἄνδρα, ἄνδρας, ἀνήρ*) the question must arise why she should not have had six. The supposed reality fails upon the hypotheses of death, divorce, or desertion. Thus it seems as if the evangelist had some uncertainty in his mind. And it is noteworthy that if Tobit iii. 8 was his basis, there is a like uncertainty in it. The Cambridge text here (B) reads, *and one of them thou didst not enjoy* (*καὶ ἐνὸς αὐτῶν οὐκ ὠνάσθης*), for which a various reading (N) is, *and of one of them thou art not named* (wife). Plainly the meaning may be (1) *and not one of them didst thou enjoy*, for Asmodeus slew them before they lived with her; or (2) *one* (i.e. *the last*) *of them thou didst not* (or *dost not*) *enjoy*; or (3) *thou wast* (or *art*) *not named as wife of one of them*; or (4) . . . *as wife of one* (i.e. *the last*) *of them*. Of these four interpretations the Fourth Gospel represents on the whole (4) most nearly.

Thus the idea of a woman who had had many husbands—the last husband doubtful—who left no children, is drawn from Tobit iii. (*ἦδη . . . ἔσχες ἄνδρας*): that of the Samaritan who had had five husbands is from 2 Kings xvii.

In John iv. 20 the dialogue rapidly passes from the five husbands to *our fathers worshipped in this mountain*. What connexion is there? Just the six words *Sir* (*κύριε*), *I perceive that thou art a prophet*. No modern reader will deny that the transition is natural and easy. The prophetic power seems to be exhibited in the divination of Jesus that this woman had had five husbands and it is implied that she admitted as much in *Sir, I perceive*. . . . This is the impression produced on the English reader. But let us note in passing that if we had not had these six words the transition in question would have been difficult indeed. Now if we look back, on the other hand, to the original in 2 Kings xvii. 34 ff. we find the transition from

the five "husbands" is forthwith to *the sons of Jacob* (cf. *our father Jacob* John iv. 12), and while the Hebrew takes this of Judah negatively, so that the Samaritans are represented as not conforming to Judah, the LXX takes it of Samaria positively, so that they conform only to their own commandment. The very next verses in 2 Kings provide *worship* twice (*προσκυνήσετε*), a word which John uses here no less than ten times in as many lines. Therefore here we have the same transition from "husbands" to "worship" that we have in John iv. This is no fortuitous coincidence. It was there long before the fourth evangelist provided the connecting link, *Sir, I perceive* . . . , and provided it with an exquisite and accomplished art.

But is *Sir, I perceive* . . . the right translation for *κύριε, θεωρῶ*? Certainly *κύριε* does mean *Sir* sometimes. But the true translation in the vast majority of cases in the New Testament for *κύριε* is *Lord* (as R.V. margin here). What has to be remembered is that John has no difference to make between *Sir* and *Lord*, and though we moderns may think that *Sir* is more appropriate here, John simply says *Lord*, as if he meant the reader to take it in the usual sense. As to *θεωρῶ* there are but two other places where it is translated *perceive* (Acts xvii. 22, xxvii. 10), and in both cases *see* would be far better, as in the one place where it is *consider* (Heb. vii. 4). More than fifty times it is *see, behold*. And it has been shown that the Papyri use the word frequently for *to see*. Therefore the translation *Lord, I see* . . . is far more natural than what we have. Thrice the woman uses the address *Lord*. The upshot is briefly that even the Samaritans, half heathens, rejecting the prophets, called Him *Lord*, called Him a *Prophet*, and came to believe and know that He was the Saviour of the world.

The way by which they came, which next occupies us,

is found to be the way of prophecy. Two prophecies are involved, and yet neither could be employed by Jesus as such, considering that Samaritans, as every one knew, rejected the Prophets and by no means regularly conformed to the Law. Schürer says: "Their observance of the law, e.g., with regard to tithes and the Levitical laws of purification, did not indeed correspond with Pharisaic requirements, on which account they were placed on a level with Gentiles. They were, however, decidedly distinguished from idolaters." Such is the evidence of the Mishna. It would therefore have been vain for Jesus to claim or for John to lead up to the belief of the Samaritans through any avenue of Argument from the Law. The Argument from Prophecy is still the road which is followed in this chapter, but it is a peculiar form of the Argument. For the prophecies here involved are, if we may use the term, submarine, like latent mountain-ranges underneath the surface: and yet they require to be charted as much as if they were Himalayas.

The two submarine prophecies here are the following:

Isaiah xii. 3. With joy *shall ye draw* (ἀντλήσετε) *water from the fountains of salvation* (a various reading being *he shall draw*, ἀντλήσεται).

Isaiah lii. 5 ff. Thus saith the Lord, Because of you continually my name is blasphemed among the Gentiles. Therefore my people shall know my name in that day, that *I am he that speaketh*. I am present as *dawn* upon *the mountains*, as feet of him that preacheth the gospel [of the] hearing of peace, as he that preacheth the gospel [of] good things: for I will make thy *salvation* to be heard saying, O Sion, thy king shall be God. . . . And the Lord will reveal his holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles, and all the ends of the earth shall see *the salvation* that cometh *from God*.

I. The first of these oracles is the basis of John iv. 10-15. It is well known to have been the jubilant greeting and motto of the Jewish people at the annual Feast of Tabernacles, just as "The Lord is risen: He is risen indeed" is the Christmas motto of the Eastern Church to-day. The water-bearing of that chiefest of all the Feasts was a symbolic ceremony that came home to the heart of every pious Jew and carried with it a multitude of lessons, of purity, of tradition in the carrying, of renovation and refreshing in the recurrence, of sacrifice in the outpouring beside the altar. I have tried to show that its lessons and at least its imagery which conveyed them were carried over from Judaism to the Christian faith by the language of baptism, which was itself drawn from the Greek of Isaiah lx.-lxii.<sup>1</sup> The literature of Baptism is so largely developed in the *Odes of Solomon* at so early a date that an explanation is required, and the explanation may well be that the Feast of Epiphany on its baptismal side, and this is certainly by far its most prominent side, originated in the Feast of Tabernacles.

This oracle, therefore, was of no casual or chance occurrence; though it is little known to many English readers in its application, it was one of the principal texts of the Bible to a Jew of the first century A.D. Its importance was too great to be passed over in any controversy. How then was its importance affected by the Argument from Prophecy? Did Jesus as the Christ fulfil it? In the Hebrew form it was not expressed in the form of a prediction for *Him* to fulfil, but for *them* who believed on Him to see fulfilled, *Ye shall draw*. . . . But in the Greek form the better reading was actually *He shall draw*. . . . And the Greek tended continually to displace the Hebrew,<sup>2</sup> and by 100

<sup>1</sup> *Journ. Theol. Studies*, vol. xiii., Jan., 1912, "The Feast of Tabernacles, etc."  
<sup>2</sup> See *Oracles in the New Testament*, pp. 53 foll., 158, etc.

A.D. had entirely displaced it outside Palestine. We should therefore expect to find the fulfilment of the prophecy according to the Greek form. In point of fact we find the words of fulfilment (John iv. 13 f.) reflect both forms of prediction: *Every one that drinketh* (πίνων), *whoso drinketh* (πίη) . . . these sentences convey the purport of the Hebrew form of the oracle. The water *that I will give him* represents the Greek form, as also, Whence *hast thou the living water?* *To draw* (ἀντλᾶν) is used thrice (John iv. 7, 11, 15). But the *drawing* is part of the prediction only: the fulfilment is such as to supersede the idea of drawing, for the water of life springs up of itself within the heart and needs no *drawing* with pail and rope.

And here it is to be observed that the idea of the fulfilment had been already partially furnished by another oracle from a very different quarter:—

Proverbs xviii. *Deep water* is reason (or [the] word, λόγος) in the heart of a man, and a river bubbleth up (ἀναπηδύει) and a fountain of life.

It is no chance coincidence with these words that the woman says *And the well is deep*. It is no chance coincidence that Jesus replies *The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water leaping up* (ἀλλομένου, for ἀναπηδύει is a very rare and difficult word unknown to Liddell and Scott) unto eternal life. What more appropriate than for Him who was the Word to speak of this deep water leaping up within the heart? The latter oracle thus provided by itself a dull and impersonal fulfilment of the former. But, once more, this, with the other oracles of the Prophe ts, was unknown to the Samaritan mind. And above all, the significance of it was unknown to all the world until the time came when those beautiful words of Isaiah were made to thrill with a life that is far greater than beauty, by the gracious personal touch of Him who is the Saviour

of the world. Only by His deliberate fulfilment of them, by His taking them as His own and uttering them from His own lips, do they carry the force of an age-long and eternal life. The greeting of the Jewish Tent-feast is extended to Samaria and made forthwith an offer to the whole world.

II. The second oracle, that on which the dialogue of John iv. 20-24 is worked, is equally instructive and capable of illuminating the dialogue itself. The clear statement that *Salvation is from (ἐκ) the Jews*, starting from them and proceeding outwards—what springs of history are concealed in that tiny word ἐκ in many passages besides this, especially that of the Virgin-birth!—connects it with the former oracle in its deep significance. That declared the eternal import of the inward and personal touch, this declares the dawn of the new inward method of spiritual life. In the citation of Isaiah lii. 5 ff., as quoted above, the italicised words are chiefly to be noted as actually present in the dialogue. (1) The *mountains* (plural) are actually mentioned, for not only does Gerizim imply Ebal, but *Jerusalem* is itself a mountain 2,500 feet above the sea. Hence *neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . .* But then (2) the very words of the oracle, *I am he that speaketh* (ἐγὼ εἶμι αὐτός ὁ λαλῶν) are reproduced in *I am, that speak to thee* (ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ λαλῶν σοι). Nothing can possibly overcome this fact. Nothing can easily surpass the exquisite personal touch of *to thee*: not even that thrilling announcement later to Martha, *The Master is come and calleth for thee*. Then (3) the force of the words *the dawn cometh*, which John iv. 21, 23 gives twice as if to emphasise it, is almost wholly lost in our poor translation *the hour cometh*. The Revisers could not indeed have been expected to have their eyes open to all the quotations, submarine or other, from the LXX in the New Testament when Hort himself

declared at the time when the revision was concluded that there were many more to be discovered, and when he marked with a star those which Moulton had supplied to him at the last (App. p. 175). The further discovery of the use of LXX is still proceeding and will proceed. Here is a very certain use of it. *The dawn* is a very rare use of the word ὥρα in LXX: it occurs only in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 13, *beautiful season*. But that it was once commonly used of a [or the] "beautiful season" is proved by the fact of its adjective ὡραῖος meaning "beautiful." Nobody who has seen the dawn in Palestine can hesitate to identify it with beauty. The Lord says not precisely *I am present as dawn* (πάρειμι ὡς ὥρα), but almost the same words, *the dawn cometh and now is* (ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν); for He it is *that preacheth the gospel of peace*, reconciling all local salvations in the universal. No other kind of peace was possible.

Now (4) we have seen above that the Samaritans were treated in the Mishna as being on a level with Gentiles. Here in Isaiah lii. we have two references to the Gentiles and one to the ends of the earth. In John iv. they are clearly implied in *the true worshippers*, in *neither in Jerusalem*, and in *from the Jews*, i.e. proceeding outside them. But (5) *the salvation* is the only true and complete translation of the definite article before this substantive, though it might seem pedantic in English. "The salvation in question" is what underlies the words. What can this be but the salvation mentioned in the oracle? *Salvation* in the New Testament very rarely has the definite article, and where the definite article is used the immediate reason for it can be seen in nearly every case. The holy city, says the oracle in the preceding context, is to be ransomed without money and without price, even as the Lord's people went into captivity to Egypt and to Assyria (the cradle of this very Samaritan people) for naught, and

yet it is owing to their captivity ( $\delta\iota'$   $\acute{\upsilon}\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ) that His name is blasphemed among the Gentiles: who know it just enough to blaspheme it, not enough to love it. In future they, too, shall love it as their salvation also, and the dawn of this bright day is now at hand. This is *the* salvation ( $\tau\eta\nu$   $\sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\iota\alpha\nu$   $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ ) which John iv. 22 takes up: it proceeds from the Jews but is not limited to them.

Thus there are ten lines of the oracle and ten lines of John iv. which involve no less than five coincidences. These cannot be fortuitous. The latter is built upon the former. But we now come to the most indubitable evidence that it was so built, and that the Lord is reasoning upon the oracle. This consists in the words translated in A.V. *God is a spirit*, most unhappily and irrelevantly, and in R.V. *God is spirit*, which is better, but still imperfect. The subject, however, is far too large for this paper.

It can only be said that in the interpretation of countless oracles the Christian Prophets were perplexed as to the meaning of *the Lord*, whether it meant "the supreme God," as in later days Justin would say, or Christ. In *The Lord said unto my lord*, Sit thou . . . the meaning was clear enough. But *the Lord* was not always Jehovah: in multitudes of passages it pointed to Christ—*the day of the Lord*, *the name of the Lord*, and many more instances which would occupy pages and pages to describe. Elsewhere I hope to be able to show that the true meaning of the words in John iv. 24 is not that of our English versions. Meanwhile I have a strong impression that the Interpreter of the oracle is a greater than John the Evangelist.

III. Whether the setting of the narrative can be considered historical is another question. There are some facts which militate against this character, two of which can here be mentioned. The first is not so much against its genuineness as against its position in John iv., where

it stands before the Judæan ministry. This was pointed out as early as the second century, when Tatian asked the question, Can a Samaritan ministry be supposed to have preceded the Judæan ministry? And to this he gave the negative answer, and therefore placed John iv. after John vi. This displacement of the traditional order of the chapters of John by Tatian, and the other displacements, have been so fully exhibited by Professor Bacon in *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* that I need only refer to that striking and important work.

The other fact is one that throws considerable light upon the geographical knowledge of the Fourth Evangelist, and is really far more important. John says *Jacob's fountain was there* (iv. 5), and Jesus sat thus *at the fountain*. Later on we read *a fountain of water leaping up into life eternal*. Now in these three places the word is *πηγή*, *fount, spring*, which frequently means *origin, source*, but never means what we call *well* (*φρέαρ*), an artificial thing contrasted with the natural supply. *Well* is used here twice; *the well is deep* and *Jacob who gave us the well*. Though of course every well worthy of the name possesses at the bottom of it a source (*πηγή*), even if the surface of the water appears from above to be quite still, this fact does not cause the well to be described as a *πηγή*, which is invariably a source of visibly running water. The well or pit (*φρέαρ*) is always and essentially a hole, whether containing water or not. Assuming Jacob's well to be that which is traditionally so called, nobody would ever call it a *πηγή*. But according to the R.V. the Fourth Gospel has done so. Naturally there is a general reluctance to say that the Fourth Evangelist did not know the locality or he could not have said *πηγή* when he meant *φρέαρ*. Naturally there is a reluctance to throw doubt upon one of the four or five undoubted identities of site in the Holy Land. Nevertheless the

facts are as they are stated above. And there are other facts. One is that the oracle of Isaiah xii. 3 has *from the fountains* (πηγῶν) of salvation, not *the wells*. This fact would suggest one solution of the difficulty, viz., that St. John went out of his way to call *the well* a *fountain* in order to prepare for exhibiting the close fulfilment of the oracle in Isaiah 'xii., though it was straining a point to use the term. If such explanation is adopted, then the point I make in this paper is admitted.

But this end could have been attained without that means, and therefore does not justify the use of it when the use involves an inaccuracy and more than an inaccuracy. For it was not necessary by any means for the evangelist to say so graphically that *Jesus sat thus by the fountain* if really He *sat by the well*, of which, further, we are told that it was deep, and a bucket and rope were required to draw from it. "Jacob's well" was 75 feet deep and quite dry in May, 1866, when Anderson descended it. Conder says it was 75 feet deep in 1875 and fills by infiltration. The depth was 67 feet in 1881. On October 31, 1910, it contained muddy and undrinkable water. It does not follow that it was always such a worthless well. Westcott observes: "The labour of constructing the well in the neighbourhood of abundant natural springs, shows that it was the work of a "stranger in the land."<sup>1</sup> It is lined throughout with rough masonry, as it is dug in alluvial soil (Warren)." Against another statement of Westcott it must be said that it is not called a 'Ain, fountain. The Rev. John Mill, in his *Three Months' Residence at Nablus*, 1864, says that the Christians call it *Beer Samarîyeh*, the "Samaritan Well," while the Samaritans call it *Beer Yakob* or "Jacob's Well," and that it is not a 'Ain (πηγή), as Westcott says it is

<sup>1</sup> Does this mean that Jacob could not wait till his men found a spring within a mile or less?

called, but a *Beer*, *Ber*, a cistern ( $\phi\rho\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\rho$ ). The Greek Church has purchased it, and after many years has now built a Church round and above it.

Travellers have been perplexed by the thought that Jacob was at this trouble to build a well a hundred feet deep in alluvial soil at this particular place, which lies in a depression within easy distance of many springs. So powerful is tradition ! And yet on what does the tradition rest ? Simply and solely on John iv. 12, *Jacob who gave us the well*. John does not say that Jacob made it, and "lined it throughout with rough masonry," without which it would have been useless. The well is not mentioned in the Old Testament. But John iv. 12 further makes the woman say that Jacob's *cattle drank of it*. This must have been a lengthy business indeed. There is a peculiar perversity and inability or fanaticism or tribal prejudice in some people, but yet Jacob had the power to purchase ground in that neighbourhood with *a hundred lambs* (Gen. xxxiii. 19), and also he asserts the power of conquest over *the Amorite* (highlander) *with my sword and with my bow* (Gen. xlviii. 22). Why then did he not acquire one of the neighbouring springs ? "There is a copious fountain in 'Askar : and a stream, capable of turning a mill, flows down the valley only 'a few rods' from Jacob's well" (G. A. Smith, quoting Robinson). There are therefore some fountains, if one is required to water the cattle. And considering the utter improbability, upon the evidence on the whole, against this particular well being the place where Jacob's cattle drank, it is important to note that what the Fourth Gospel vouches for is not that it was such, but that the Samaritan woman said so. Consequently the whole tradition since A.D. rests upon (1) very insecure testimony that Jacob's well was at Sychar, though a watering place of Jacob there is extremely probable : and upon (2) no testimony at all

that the traditional well is Jacob's well. But let us see.

Since the woman reported the tradition that Jacob's "cattle drank of the well," we look for a fountain, not a well, and one such fountain is the '*Ain Defna* near which the Turkish barracks have been built beside the road. This fine spring is 1,000 yards from Nâblus, and is seen by every wayfarer. This is the particular potential mill-stream which Robinson has described, little as it might appear from Professor Adam Smith's mention of it. Robinson says <sup>1</sup>: "The difficulties of the general question are in no degree lessened. The woman would have had to cross a mill-stream in order to reach the well; and it remains just as inexplicable why the well should ever have been dug. The easiest solution of this latter difficulty is the hypothesis, that the fountain Defneh, from which the mill-stream comes, may be of later date than the well; the effect, perhaps, of earthquakes in this abundantly watered region." Dr. Adam Smith rightly fights shy of the earthquake hypothesis: "In an argument like this we do not dare to count on it." And what sort of earthquake was it that upset the whole disposition of the waters in the vale of Shechem while it did not disturb the masonry of Jacob's well 100 feet deep in alluvial soil?

Now the Bordeaux pilgrim (333 A.D.), the earliest authority for the position of Sychar, places Sychar (Sechar) 1,000 yards from Neapolis (Sechim). The exact concurrence of measurements is remarkable. There is no reason why the '*Ain Defna* should not have been the *fountain* where Jacob watered his cattle, and also the *fountain* at which Jesus sat, and also the fountain of Sychar and in Sychar. But it could not be also the place where the deep well was: Jacob's well is 1,000 yards further to the S.E. And the Greek compels us to distinguish the two, as was observed

<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Researches*, iii., 1856, p. 133.

above. Nothing but unusual prejudice would ever have led the world to suppose that we ought to identify them, or even that the Fourth Gospel intended us to do so. Had it even begun by mention of a *well* and afterwards called it a *fountain*, we might, under conditions very hard to imagine, have said that here was a rough description of one and the same well. But now this mode of conciliation is forbidden to us.

Yet if we look at the passage again we can see that the whole discourse is quite natural upon the supposition that it took place beside the fountain and not beside the well. The woman came to *draw* water. This suits the fountain. Jesus asks her to give Him to drink. This request at the fountain is quite natural, whether we suppose that He and she arrived simultaneously and He wished to make the friendly overture, or that He had already drunk before and *thirsted again* (John iv. 13). Nor is there any difficulty in supposing that in A.D. 30 there was a "*Jacob's fountain*" (πηγή τοῦ Ἰακώβ, John iv. 5). In fact the same verse seems to say that there was a "*Jacob's place*" (or a *Joseph's place*) which was more famous than Sychar and helped to localise Sychar. It is not conceivable that if Sychar was Shechem the evangelist would have localised the well-known Shechem by the explanation *near to the place which Jacob gave to his son Joseph*. And in any case why should he have written these words unless to show that the name of Jacob lingered about the locality? The difficulty only occurs in John iv. 10, 11, and this is the explanation I now suggest. *Living water!* "He means," the woman thinks, "the healing water from the sacred well called *Jacob's well* a mile further on, but it is ill coming at that: often it is dry, and one must bring his own bucket for it, and this wayfarer has none." Therefore she says *Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep*. "This well" is not an

expression that she ever uses ; she would have said “ *that well* ” for it was distant ; but *the well* is intelligible if it was famous, and it was famous only if it was supposed to possess magical qualities, as well it might if it was intermittent even in those days ; and if it was magical she might have supposed that once upon a time the cattle drank of it. There could be none greater than *our father Jacob* !

I can see no other explanation that will not accuse the Fourth Evangelist of utter carelessness in interchanging a fountain with a well in that neighbourhood and so of being ignorant of the geography of one of the best-known localities in the land. That he did not know the difference of meaning between the Greek for *fountain* and the Greek for *well* is a hopelessly untenable supposition. Equally untenable is it that knowing the locality he should not have cared to make the place of discourse plain to his readers. Equally untenable is it that if he were of the Twelve he did not know the locality ; though his knowledge of it does not prove him the son of Zebedee.

E. C. SELWYN.

## EXEGETICA.

### I.

#### “ OUR DAILY BREAD.”

HERR A. DEBRUNNER (in *Glotta*, 1912, 249 f.) offers an ingenious explanation of the enigmatic *ἐπιούσιος* in Matthew vi. 11=Luke xi. 3. He regards it as equivalent to *ἐπὶ τὴν οὔσαν* (sc. *ἡμέραν*). The latter phrase occurs in full in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (781), e.g., where Sophokles makes Oedipus exclaim : *κάγω βαρυνθεὶς τὴν μὲν οὔσαν ἡμέραν μόλις κατέσχοιν*. Now, at the time when the Gospels were written, Herr Debrunner thinks, *ἡ οὔσα ἡμέρα* may have been