

## NAZARETH, NAZOREAN AND JESUS.

BY A. KAMPMEIER.

SINCE Prof. W. B. Smith in the article, "The Real Question of the Ancestry of Jesus" (*Open Court*, January, 1910) says: "Neither Josephus nor the Old Testament, nor the Talmud (for nearly a thousand years after Christ) knows anything about Nazareth," I would call his attention to the fact that Nazareth is mentioned in a Jewish elegy by Eleazar ha Kalir, 900 A. D.; a notice though, which goes back to an older Midrash. According to that notice there was a "station for priests in Nazareth"<sup>1</sup> who went to Jerusalem to do service in the temple.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore no such town as Dalmanutha (Mark viii. 10) occurs in either Josephus, the Old Testament or the Talmud, nor does Josephus or the Old Testament mention the Chorazin and Magdala of the New Testament. The silence about these towns could as well be adduced as proof of their non-existence as the silence adduced against Nazareth. A point in order here is that in the catalogue of cities in Galilee (Josh. xix) only the cities are mentioned and not the villages, as is expressly stated. Galilee had more communities than only those mentioned in that list by name. Josephus also says: "Cities and villages lie thick here, everywhere full of people." (*De Bell. Jud.*, III, 3, 2).

Further the form *Nazara* "is sustained" by such important manuscripts as  $\aleph$ , B and  $\Xi$  in Luke iv. 16 and Math iv. 13.

Further if the existence of Nazareth in the first century is denied, the question must be answered why the prevailing form in *eth* or *et* is used. Why did not the writer of the First Gospel, if he wrongly brought *Nazoraios* in connection with some fictitious town, rather infer that its name was *Nazora*? The ending *eth* must be accounted for. It is a Hebrew ending occurring in Galilean

<sup>1</sup> משמרת נצרת.

<sup>2</sup> Herzog and Plitt, *Encyclopedia*, 1903.

towns as Kinnereth (Deut. iii. 17) and Dabasheth (Josh. xix. 11). The ending *ath*, the original feminine ending of nouns, generally dulled in *ah* or toneless *eth*, is also found in names of Galilean towns, and some think that Nazareth was originally pronounced *Nazarath* (that form occurring in some manuscripts). Thus there are such towns as Dabrath and Anaharazā and others of the same ending in the catalogue in Josh. xix. Very probably the purely Hebrew word *Nazareth* was already in the original Matthew, just as a very similar form of locality, *Arzareth*, is mentioned in the thoroughly Jewish writing of the first century, the fourth book of Ezra.

Then, too, early in the second century Nazareth was considered as the original dwelling place of the parents of Jesus and his early home. Justin Martyr (died 165) mentions Nazareth according to the account of Luke as the home of the parents of Jesus (*Dialog. c. Tryph.* LXXVIII). Is it possible that Justin, himself a native of Shechem, Samaria, would have mentioned this, if Nazareth was a fiction in his times? Again, if Professor Smith accepts Epiphanius, living in the second half of the fourth century, as authority on the *Nasaraioi* and *Nazaraioi* living in Cochaba and other towns mentioned by him in Coele Syria and vicinity, why can not Julius Africanus, living in the first half of the third century and like Epiphanius in Palestine, be accepted as an authority on Nazara (as he writes it) which he mentions together with the same Cochaba, mentioned by Epiphanius, as places where the relatives of Jesus had been living? The passage in question is quoted in full by Eusebius from Africanus (*Hist. Eccl.* I, 1).

Moreover, we must not confine ourselves to the First Gospel, but also see what Mark has to say about Nazareth. This Gospel (by many considered the oldest of the present Gospels), without saying anything about the derivation of *Nazoraïos* and fixing on Capernaum as the place where Jesus did most of his first work, nevertheless clearly distinguishes between this town and Nazareth. After having described in the preceding chapter the work of Jesus in Capernaum, Mark in vi. 1 says that Jesus "went out from there"<sup>3</sup> and came to his native country, just as he says in iii. 21, that "his folks<sup>4</sup> went *out* to lay hold of him, for they said he is out of his mind," and that his mother and brothers came (verse 31) and were standing outside and sent in to him, i. e., in a house in Capernaum. Mark likewise, when beginning with the career of Jesus, says distinctly, "And Jesus came from Nazareth etc." (i. 9).

<sup>3</sup> ἐξῆλθεν ἐκεῖθεν.

<sup>4</sup> οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ.

The further fact that Nazareth was inhabited only by Jews until the reign of Constantine, as Epiphanius states, seems to be significant when considering that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish in his ideas. Though only a village, Nazareth may very well have had a synagogue, for according to the Rabbins in every place where there were ten people a house should be set aside for prayer.

May not also the words, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46) even though the Fourth Gospel is otherwise little credited as history, be of value in regard to our question? Was Nazareth perhaps even then at the date of the latest Gospel an insignificant town?

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Proceeding to the forms *Nazoraïos*, *Nazaraïos*, *Nazarenos* we may infer from them also the existence of a Nazareth in the first century.

The form *Nazarenos* in Mark must be taken into consideration in the passages quoted in my note.<sup>5</sup> As said there, they are probably formed from *Nazara* as Magdalene from *Magdala*.<sup>6</sup>

The further possibility remains, as I think I have shown in the same note, that even *Nazoraïos* is formed from *Nazara* by a change of the second *a* into *o* as frequently occurs in Hebrew.

Again, proper names, when taken into a foreign language often change considerably. They are altered so as to be easily pronounced in that tongue. The formation *Nazarethaios* was not required in Greek. Hebrews formed their *gentilicia* by adding an *i* to names of countries, cities etc., often cutting away whole syllables. Thus an inhabitant of *Thimnata* is a *Thimni* (Jud. xv. 6), and in the Talmud a follower of Jesus a *Nozri*, plural *Nozrim*.<sup>7</sup> The *a* here goes over into *o* as in the participial form of *nazar*, as we shall see later when discussing the Jesus-Nazar-yah theory of Dr. Smith.

The suspicion that there may have been a Nazareth after all is strengthened when considering the prophecy cited in Matt. ii. 23. This citation, as unwarranted as the previous one, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," referring not to Jesus but to the Israelitish people, most probably referred to Is. xi. 1, where the Messiah is called a *nezzer*,<sup>8</sup> a sprout. Had the Gospel writer referred to Jesus as being a Nazirite, a devotee, he would have found a Greek form for this idea ready made in the Septuagint. In Lam. iv. 7 the Hebrew *nasir*<sup>9</sup> is translated *Nazeiraios*,<sup>10</sup> and in Jud. xiii. 5 the form

<sup>5</sup> See *Open Court*, Dec. 1909, p. 766.

<sup>6</sup> *Ναζαρη̅νος, Μαγδαληνη̅.*      <sup>7</sup> *נוצרים, נוצרי.*

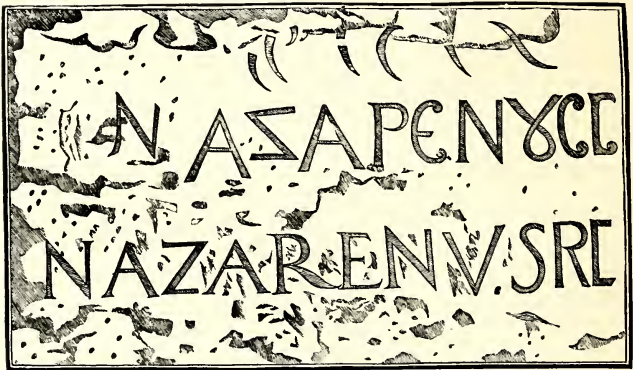
<sup>8</sup> *נצר*

<sup>9</sup> *נזיר*

<sup>10</sup> *Ναζειραι̅ος.* Ed. by H. B. Swete. 1895.

*Nazir*<sup>11</sup> is used. The Septuagint knows the meaning of this term very well, for in other places it translates "Nazirites" by the Greek word *euxamenoî*, i. e., "devotees." But the Gospel writer in citing a prophecy does not say *Naziraios* or *Naziraios* but *Nazoraïos*. This must not be overlooked, for it may point to the fact that after all *Nazoraïos* may be connected with Nazareth.

It is further significant that the so-called "Christians" of John, a sect seemingly deifying John the Baptist and, though very syncretistic, standing in connection with the origins of Christianity, call themselves in their holy book, the *Ginza Nazorajc*.<sup>12</sup> We might expect a different form from a sect claiming connection with the Baptist, as the Baptist was surely more of a Nazirite than Jesus,



but very probably the name by which they call themselves dates from a time when both the followers of John and those of Jesus were indiscriminately called *Nazoraïoi*. The connections between the disciples of John and those of Jesus were very close as we know from the New Testament.

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I think we are not necessarily obliged to assume that the believers in Jesus were generally called *Nazoraïoi* in the times of Paul though it is so reported in Acts. This may be the case, but on the other hand the writer of Acts, one of the later writers of the New Testament, may have transferred this name from his times, when *Nazoraïoi* had become more generally applied to Christians by their

<sup>11</sup> *Naẓeîp*. The Alexandrian manuscript in that passage has *Naẓipaïos* and verse 7, *Naẓeipaïos*.

<sup>12</sup> נַזְרַאֲרַיִס cited in Herzog and Plitt.

Jewish opponents, to the times of Paul in his history, just as the late writer of the Fourth Gospel makes Pilate put on the cross the inscription "Jesus Nazoraios, the King of the Jews," while the Synoptics have simply "The King of the Jews."

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The most difficult point in the question of the existence of Nazareth is the fact that if the Greek form *Nazareth* is a translation of the Hebrew, the Hebrew would have been written *Nasareth*<sup>13</sup> as the Septuagint throughout renders the Hebrew letter *Zade*<sup>14</sup> by the Greek letter *Sigma* (Σ) with the exception of three passages, Gen. xiii. 21 and Jer. xxxi. 4 and 34, where the Hebrew *Zoar*<sup>15</sup> is rendered by *Zogor*.<sup>16</sup> Dr. E. Nestle has shown (*Open Court*, March 1910, p. 191) that the other forms I referred to in my previous note were not correct readings according to the latest editions. On the other hand the Hebrew letter *Sain*<sup>17</sup> is always rendered in the Septuagint by the Greek letter *Zeta* (Ζ). Still there are also a few exceptions. In Gen. xxxvi. 12 and 15 the Hebrew *Eliphaz*<sup>18</sup> is rendered in Greek *Eliphaz*,<sup>19</sup> while in verses 11 and 16 of the same chapter the Hebrew *Kenas*<sup>20</sup> is rendered in Greek *Kenez*,<sup>21</sup> just as in the next chapter to the one in Genesis, where the Hebrew *Zoar* is rendered in Greek by *Zogor*, the same Hebrew form is rendered in Greek by *Sēgor*.<sup>22</sup> Dr. Nestle attributes the form *Zogor* to Aramaic influence, as the Aramaic *sair* (small) written with a *Sain* corresponds to the Hebrew *zair* written with a *Zade*. The two sibilants *Sain* and *Zade* are related sounds and we find Hebrew words of the same meaning sometimes written with *Zade* and sometimes with *Sain* in the Hebrew text. Thus the Hebrew words for "to cry out," "to rejoice," "gold" and "golden" all occur written both with *Sain* and *Zade*.<sup>23</sup> If this is the case may not *Nazareth* have originally also been pronounced or written in two ways? Perhaps also in this way Nazareth was arbitrarily brought in connection both with *nezor*, (sprout) and the verb *nasar*, from which the word *nasir* (devotee), also meaning "prince," is taken.

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Commentators have brought the form *Nazoraios* in connection with forms derived from the verb *nasar*<sup>24</sup> (to preserve); thus *nasur* [passive participle] for Jesus as one preserved from danger when a child, or *nezurim* for the first Christians as being "the preserved of

13 נזרת	14 צ	15 זער	16 Ζογορ	17 ζ
18 אֵלִיפָאז	19 Ελιφας.	20 קֵנָז.	21 Κενης.	22 Σηγγορ.
23 זעק and זעק; ערץ and ערץ; זרה and זרה.				
24 נזר.				

Israel" according to Isaiah xlix. 6 etc. Such guesses are in my opinion precarious and so also the theory of Dr. Smith based thereon. According to him *Nazoraïos* or *Nazaraïos* is nothing but a Greek form for an assumed Hebrew form *Nazar-yah*, i. e., Guardian-yah (*yah*, abbreviation from Yahveh). To the author of the theory Jesus the Nazoraïos is no historical personality, but a pure abstraction. The *Nazoraïoi*, he thinks, called themselves so from God or Yahveh, who had the attribute Guardian, Protector. The theory hinges on the report of Epiphanius that there was a sect "existing before Christ and who knew not Christ" called *Nasaraïoi*. I regret to have no copy of Epiphanius, but if I am right, this great heresy expert distinguishes between pre-Christian *Nasaraïoi*, vegetarians and rejectors of the Pentateuch, and *Nazaraïoi*, as the Jewish Christians and believers in Jesus were later called. Dr. Smith seems to assume that both are the same sect. Granted. If *Nazar-yah* is assumed to mean Guardian-yah, I would say that proper names ending in *yah* are extremely common in the Old Testament, but that they are all names of human persons expressing some act or relation of Yahveh to the person who bears such a name; they are never the names of God.

*Nazar-yah* or rather *Nezar-yah*, as we may see presently, would mean "one whom Yahveh guards," just as *Zephan-yah* and *Shemaryah* mean "one whom Yahveh protects and guards." The Guardian-yah of Dr. Smith might as well have been called Zephan-yah or Shemaryah.

Then, too, *Nazar-yah* is not a right formation. If a Hebrew word grows at the end and the accent moves forward, a full vowel changes into a half vowel, thus the full *a* in the beginning changes into short *e*; for instance, Zephanyah instead of *Zaphanyah*, Shemaryah instead of *Shamaryah*, Zecaryah instead of *Zacaryah*, etc., etc.<sup>25</sup>

If the attribute of Protector, Guardian, was to be given to God, the present participle form of *nazar*, i. e., *nozer*, would have had to be used, but the participle form of *shamar* would have done as well for the sect of Dr. Smith. In fact *shamar* is used as well as *nazar* for describing God as Protector in the Old Testament.

In order to support his theory of *Nazaryah* and that there never was a carpenter Jesus, but that the carpenter is nothing but the Guardian-yah, it is very convenient for the theory that there is a Hebrew word *nasar*,<sup>26</sup> which means "to saw." Although this verb is spelled differently than *nazar* it must fit in with the theory. It is

<sup>25</sup> וְנָזַרְתָּ: שָׁמַרְתָּ: צִדְדִיָּה

<sup>26</sup> נָסַר.

lucky that *Nazoraïos* is spelled with a *z* or else we would have a *Nasaryah*, a Sawyeryah.

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Likewise the name "Jesus" is not to Dr. Smith the name of a human person but an attribute to God and means about the same as *nazar*, or as much as the Greek *Soter*, Saviour. But (1) Jesus was an extremely common name among the ancient Hebrews and the Jews of the first century, and (2) *Jesus* never means Saviour in spite of the pun in Matt. i. 21. *Jesus* (Hebrew *Jehoshua*, abbreviated *Jeshua*) means "one whose help is Yahveh," just as *Elishua* means "one whose help is God." The Hebrew word for Saviour is *Moshia*<sup>27</sup> and is used very often in the Old Testament as an attribute of God or Yahveh, just as the Greeks spoke of *Zeus Soter*. It is therefore also translated in the Septuagint by *Soter* or the participle *sozon*,<sup>28</sup> and the word *Soter* as an attribute of God occurs also in the very Hebraic first chapter of Luke (verse 47). *Moshia* would therefore have been the attribute the sect of Dr. Smith would have chosen for God and not a human proper name as common as "Gotthilf" in German.

After such daring assumptions in the theory of Jesus-Nazar-yah, I think it safer to fall back on the idea that there really was a carpenter Jesus after all, who was very probably also from Nazareth, especially since we cannot get around some very hard facts mentioned below.

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Professor Smith lays stress on the point that "the heresy of the *Nasaraïoi* was before Christ and knew not Christ." If this heresy consisted in a view similar to that held by the Jewish-Christian *Nazaraïoi* (this term is retained by early ecclesiastical writers for a portion of the Jewish Christians, the other being the Ebionites, after the term *Christianoï* had become more general for the Gentile Christians) who believed in a heavenly Christ, that had appeared in the human Jesus after he had already appeared in Adam and in the patriarchs, had in fact gone through different incarnations, there was not anything peculiarly astonishing in the pre-Christian *Nasaraïoi*, of Dr. Smith.

The Jewish-Christian *Nazaraïoi* accepted the Gospel of the Hebrews which contains no account of a miraculous birth of Jesus and makes the Holy Spirit the mother of Jesus. Perhaps those pre-Christian heretics "who knew not Christ" were such Gnostics, who believed in a heavenly Christ taking upon himself different incarna-

<sup>27</sup> מוֹשִׁיָּע.

<sup>28</sup> σώζων.

tions. But was not Paul such a pre-Christian Gnostic also, who transferred all his mystical ideas about the heavenly Christ to the person of Jesus, whose human character in his letters almost entirely disappears under the mythical speculations which he sets forth about him? Paul likewise knows nothing about a miraculous birth of Jesus; he speaks about "the last, the heavenly Adam," and as in the Gospel to the Hebrews the Holy Spirit expresses satisfaction at having found in Jesus a place for rest of her firstborn son (the Hebrew for Spirit being of feminine gender) so to Paul, Christ is essentially a "son of the Spirit," to use a peculiar Gnostic Semitic expression; yes Paul in his letters even identifies Christ with the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 17) in the same way that a rabbinical speculation said that the Messiah was already mentioned at the time of creation since he was the Spirit of God hovering over the deep.

The more I study the ancient Jewish literature outside of the Bible, the more clearly I find the pre-Christian Christ standing out in it. But the mystical and gnostic views about him expressed in that literature were transferred by Paul, very often in exactly the same terms and phrases, and by other men like Apollos, who, to use the words of Epiphanius, "were before Christ and knew not Christ," upon the person of the historical Jesus. For I do not see how we can ever get around the fact, that in spite of all the mystical speculations of Paul upon the heavenly Christ and his work, he nevertheless speaks of the married brothers of the Lord, of his special disciples, of the last night of his life, of his death on the cross and of the visions, which many believers before Paul's conversion and Paul himself had of him after his death. Jesus was to Paul an historical reality, who in some way or another must have made such a powerful impression upon the first Christian circles that they felt justified in conveying upon his person all the attributes of the heavenly Christ existing in pre-Christian Jewish mysticism and gnosticism about this matter. These views may not have been uniform but rather chaotic, still it was for this reason of utmost importance that an historical person should furnish a point about which these views crystallized into something of a system. I think it safer to assume an historical Jesus than the pre-Christian Jesus of Professor Smith, a pure abstraction.

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Professor Smith has entirely misquoted 2 Cor. v. 16. Paul says: "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet we know him no more." Paul intends to say that as a follower of Christ he



from now on entirely leaves out of account in the Jew his Jewish origin, in the Greek his Greek origin, in the slave his bondage, etc. (compare Gal. iii. 28).

Further according to the context Paul compares the view which he had of Jesus as a mere man, a common Jew, before his conversion, with the view he now has of him as the bearer of the heavenly Christ. Paul intends to say nothing whatever of the non-existence of a human Jesus as Professor Smith infers. Some commentators have rather inferred from this passage that Paul had seen Jesus while still alive.

The question is not whether there was a pre-Christian Christ, but a human Jesus. A pre-Christian Christ there existed in the ideas of many a Jew before Jesus and so also in the mind of Paul, not only the idea of a common human Messiah, but of a heavenly mystical Christ. The extra-canonical Jewish literature proves this. Without these views there would not have been a bridge for Paul and others like Apollos from Judaism to Christianity. The question whether there was a human Jesus is I think not so problematic as some insist. For as I said before, I do not see how we can ever get around what Paul says about the brothers of Jesus, (whose names are even given in the Synoptics) etc. If in the religious history of mankind in other cases men have been looked upon as special divine incarnations or have themselves believed they were such, why in the origin of Christianity should this feature alone be wanting?

It is the safest way to see in the Jesus Christ of Christianity a mixture of the mythical heavenly Christ and the historical Jesus, just as we have in the *Nibelungenlied* a mixture of the mythical goddess Brunhilde and an historical queen Brunhilde; the mixture of a mythical Gunther and an historical Burgundian king Guntram; in *Krimhilde* a mixture of a mythical Krimhilde and an historical Hildico, the last wife of Attila who defeated the Burgundian kings, etc.

P. Hermann (*Deutsche Mythologie*) says: "The presupposition of the epic is the heroic legend and that of the latter mythology. The heroic legend consists of two elements: (1) an upper, heavenly; gods come down to men yet without becoming fully man; and (2) a lower, earthly; historical persons, especially those of the times of national struggles, are raised to superhuman beings. All heroes, whose history is not probable or provable, originally were gods." These words also apply to Jesus. The historical existence of Jesus appears as well proven and provable as that of many other historical persons of whom little is known; the *Christ* is mystical and mythical.