

## NAZARETH—GENEZARETH—ELIZABETH.

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IT is absolutely excluded that *Nazarenes* can mean men born in Nazareth; the word must be the name of a sect of which Jesus was a member" (P. Carus, *The Pleroma*, 1909, p. 46).

Of course when Paul is called "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," this does not mean that all the men whom he led were born in Nazareth, but to deny that of the first from whom the sect took the name is a verdict far too sweeping.

The objection in the Fourth Gospel that nothing good could come out of Nazareth (quoted by Carus, p. 112) is made by Nathanael (John i. 46) who is said to have been from Cana (John xxi. 2), i. e., from the place nearest to Nazareth, and the saying may be one of those expressions by which the inhabitants of neighboring places are wont to provoke each other.

As frequently pointed out, the difficulty lies in the linguistic fact that the Semitic name of the place has a sharp *s*, while the name of the sect, and in the Greek Gospels the name of the town as well, is spelled with a soft *z*. This strange spelling of Nazareth puzzled me for a long time, but I now think it due *merely to wrong analogy*.

Those people to whom we owe the Greek Gospels knew of the Nazirites (with *z*) and consequently spelled the name of the town also with *z*, which they ought to have spelled with *s*.

Analogy, and wrong analogy, is one of the most powerful forces in the formation of languages, and I can now adduce two very nice parallels to this process to which I ascribe the origin of the spelling Nazareth.

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Ask any German Protestant the name of the lake on whose borders Jesus taught, and he will answer, the lake Genesareth. The name is spelled in this way with a soft *z*, for instance, on the

maps accompanying my editions of the Greek Testament. Why? Because these maps are taken from an edition of the German Lutheran Bible. Luther himself had spelled the name in Mark vi. 53 in all his impressions, Genesareth (with *s*); it is only the work of the German Bible-version of 1892 that the spelling in this place also was assimilated to the spelling of Matt. xiv. and Luke v., where Luther had already used the soft *z*. The same analogy was in force even in the pre-Lutheran editions of the Bible to such an extent that two of them (that of Anton Sorg, Augsburg 1477, and that of H. Schönsperger, Augsburg 1487) printed the name Genesareth in Mark vi, in two words: "Sie kamen in das Land *gen nazareth*" (as if it were: "They came into the country towards Nazareth"). Even some early editions of the Greek Testament (for example those of Erasmus, Bogardus, Colinaeus and Gerbel) spell the name with  $\xi$  (soft *z*) and I should not wonder if the same spelling would turn up in some Greek manuscripts, as it is also found in Latin and Coptic manuscripts. (In Luke v. almost all Coptic manuscripts have soft  $\xi$ ).

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Another example of the transition of a sharp or broad *s* into a soft *z* is offered by the name Elisabeth, the ordinary English form of which is now Elizabeth. I do not exactly know the linguistic causes which in this case led to the transition; but how old it is may be gathered from the fact that the oldest Latin manuscripts of the Gospels written on English soil (in Northumbria) or by English scribes give the name Elizabeth. Such are the codices of Dublin, Lichfield, Kells, Tours, Lindisfarne (see the Latin New Testament of Wordsworth-White). These manuscripts date partly from the seventh century.

After these dry examples to illustrate the power of analogy, let me conclude with two which may provoke a smile.

The monastic rule of St. Benedict of Narsia begins in the best tradition. *Obsculta fili*, "Harken, Son, to my words." This spelling with *b* for *osculta* (= *ausculta*) is merely to be explained by the fact that the Saint wrongly saw in the first part of the word the Latin preposition *ob*. But the same spelling is found in two wall-inscriptions in Pompeii.

Quite the same mistake may be frequently observed in Suabian schools in the pronunciation and spelling of the German word *Ameise*, meaning "ant." When in a Suabian country school the children ought to say or write, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," they

frequently say and write *An-meise* for *Ameise*, because in their dialect the *A* of *Ameise* is pronounced in the same nasal way as the preposition *an* in words like *ansehen*, *Angesicht*. Therefore, they believe, if they wish to pronounce and spell the word correctly they must say and write *An-meise*. In former days it was written even *On-meise* or *Ohn-meise*, as if it contained the preposition *ohne*, "without."

In view of such parallels from various places, languages and centuries I think the supposition not too daring, that the puzzling spelling Nazareth is due to an early confusion with the Nazirites.