

Ναζαρηνός - Ναζωραῖος

An Unsolved Riddle in the Synoptic Tradition

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Translations of the New Testament generally use the term “Nazarene”, in the sense of “from Nazareth”, for Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωραῖος, as Jesus is called in the Synoptic Gospels, in John and in the Acts of the Apostles.¹ There are good reasons, however, for doubting this translation, although lengthy critical debate has produced no completely satisfactory solution. It should be observed that, in Acts 24.5, Paul is referred to as ὁ πρωτοστάτης τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἵρέσεως, and Epiphanius (*panar. haer.* XXIX, 5,1-7) speaks of a αἵρεσις τῶν Ναζωραίων. The term is used, then, for the Christians of Jerusalem, and later for a Judaeo-Christian community. In addition, in post-biblical Hebrew, Christians are referred to as נוצרים, in Syriac as *nāṣrāyē*, and in Arabic as *naṣārā* (sing. *naṣrānī*). In the present paper I would like to adduce evidence in support of one of the solutions advanced, while aware of the fact that a number of critical problems remain insurmountable. I shall first give a summary of the use of the two terms in the Synoptic tradition, in John and in Acts, afterwards indicating briefly the solutions offered to date.

I

The most ancient form of the appellative is Ναζαρηνός, and as such appears four times in Mark, who never uses Ναζωραῖος. The first entry is in Mk 1.24. In the synagogue at Capernaum a man, ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ, apostrophises Jesus: τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ; ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς; οἶδά σε τίς εἶ· ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ. This is the only time the appellative appears without the article; the formula is Hebrew and seems to be the current form (הַלְלֵנוּ לְךָ יְהוָה Jdg 11.12; 1 Kg 17.18; קְהֵלֵנוּ לְךָ 2 Sm 16.10; cf. Jsh 22.24 and Mt 8.29). The compiler of Mark has interpreted Ναζαρηνός as the equivalent of ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ. Lk 4.34 reproduces Mk 1.24, adding only the exclamation ἔα: ἔα τί ἡμῖν κ.τ.λ., which some manuscripts (8^c, C etc.) introduce into Mark, which consequently represents here a text which is *without doubt ancient*.

The second entry is in Mk 10.46-47, in a context which is not dissimilar. When Jesus leaves Jericho, a blind man, ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος (probably: Βαρτιμαῖος ὁ ἐστὶν υἱὸς Τιμαίου; cf. 3.17; 7.11, 34 and 14.36; Τιμαῖος ὁ

¹ On the (English) translations of Ναζωραῖος in Mt 2.23, see W. Barnes Tatum, “Matthew 2.23, Wordplay and Misleading Translations”, *The Bible Translator* 27, 1976, 135-138.

υἱὸς Τιμαίου in the Syriac versions),² who was sitting begging at the roadside, ἀκούσας ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός ἐστίν, shouted out: υἱὲ Δαυὶδ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με (repeated at 10.48). Here the appellative is not from the mouth of the saved man (or, more precisely, from the demon in him), but objectively characterises Jesus *in contrast to the messianic appellative with which the blind man addresses him*. Luke (18.37-38) relies on Mark, but re-elaborates, not giving the name of the blind man (which in Mark presents difficulties), and having him ask a number of questions about the group of people arriving. To the reply ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος παρέρχεται (decidedly better Greek), he cries *etc.* Luke's only significant variation is the transformation of Ναζαρηνός into Ναζωραῖος. Some manuscripts (D *etc.*) give Ναζαρηνός, while in Mark a number of others (Ⲙ, C *etc.*) have corrected Ναζαρηνός as Ναζωραῖος. The text in Luke is therefore certainly secondary, and *reveals the tendency to correct Ναζαρηνός as Ναζωραῖος*.

The third entry is in Mk 14.67, the episode of Peter's denial. Here one of the servants of the High Priest sees Peter warming himself and asks him: καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; which Peter denies. Shortly afterwards (14.70), those present state that he is most certainly one of the disciples of Jesus καὶ γὰρ Γαλιλαῖος εἶ. In the parallel passage in Matthew, the appellative Γαλιλαῖος is transferred to Jesus: the woman says καὶ σὺ ἦσθα μετὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Γαλιλαίου (26.69), the bystanders adding: οὗτος ἦν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου (26.71). In Luke (22.59), only the bystanders affirm that Peter Γαλιλαῖός ἐστίν (= Mark) and (23.6) Pilate asks if Jesus is a Galilean, ὁ ἀνθρώπος Γαλιλαῖος, and refers him to Herod on this account. Here, too, the oldest text is certainly Mark, which uses Ναζαρηνός: Γαλιλαῖος (Mt 26.69) and Ναζωραῖος (26.71) are almost certainly secondary. Of interest is the similarity between the three terms, of a "geographical" nature according to some commentators.³

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Lk 24.19 would seem to be the only use of Ναζαρηνός outside Mark, but a closer examination of the Synoptic tradition shows that this is not exactly the case.

Luke's pericope (24.13-35) is that of the two disciples going to Emmaus. Two of Jesus' circle are travelling to Emmaus some days after the crucifixion, and speak of what happened in Jerusalem when the risen Jesus joined them and, hiding his identity, asked them what they had been discussing. "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" one of them asks him, to which Jesus asks "What things?"

² H.B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 1913³, 242-243; P.W. Schmiedel in *EB I*, 1909, 489-491, s.v. Βαρτιμαῖος.

³ On non-ethnic connotations of the term Γαλιλαῖος, see J. Armenti, "On the Use of the Term 'Galilean' in the Writings of Flavius Josephus", *JQR* 72, 1981-82, 45-49; S. Freyne in *ABD II*, 1992, 876b-879a, s.v. Galileans.

ποῖα; receiving the answer τὰ περὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ, ὃς ἐγένετο ἀνὴρ προφήτης κ.τ.λ.

The pericope follows the women's discovery of the empty tomb (24.1-11) and Peter's recognition of it (24.12), *thereby revealing a break in the narrative*. It begins *ex abrupto* with the words καὶ ἰδοὺ δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ᾗσαν πορευόμενοι εἰς κ.τ.λ.: δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν having no reference to anything preceding it. In actual fact the pericope is a narrative development of Mk 16.12: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δυσὶν ἐξ αὐτῶν περιπατοῦσιν ἐφανερῶθη ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ. The material used by Luke, including Ναζαρηνός, therefore comes most probably from Mark. A number of manuscripts (K, A, D, W, etc.) give Ναζωραῖος at Lk 24.19, but this is simply a further example of the above-noted tendency to correct Ναζαρηνός as Ναζωραῖος.⁴

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The first entry of Ναζωραῖος occurs in Mt 2.23. After his return from Egypt Joseph settled in Galilee for fear of Archelaus, καὶ ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτ' ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ὅτι Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται. The "prophecy" does not exist in the Old Testament, although there are other cases of "prophetic" quotation of the kind, e.g. Ezr 9.11 (= Ἐσδρας I 8.82-83). Matthew is not here referring to a prophecy, as is clear from the expression itself, differing from the "introductory formulae" usual in this Gospel,⁵ and the expression τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν excludes any possibility of "prophets" here meaning the second part of the Hebrew canon, as has been sustained. Furthermore, ὅτι should introduce a *verbatim* quotation. The compiler of Matthew was simply giving an explanation of the word Ναζωραῖος as found in the tradition, *but without understanding its meaning*. Since Mark is one of Matthew's sources, and Ναζαρηνός is *completely absent* from Matthew, it is safe to say with complete confidence that the tendency in the Synoptic tradition is to dispense with Ναζαρηνός since the tradition ascribes the meaning "of Nazareth" to Ναζωραῖος.

As observed above, in Mt 26.71, οὗτος ἦν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου is secondary compared with Mk 14.69, οὗτος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐστίν, and is quoting Mk

⁴ On the nature of the episode, see H. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments* (FRLANT, 1), 1902, 71. Cf. also: E. Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium Erklärt* (H.z.NT, 5), 1975³ (1929), 233-235.

⁵ Barnes Tatum (n. 1), 135-137; W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Matthew* (ICC), I, 1988, "In this verse ὅτι introduces a remark of scriptural substance, not a sentence found in the OT, and this fact is in part signalled by the unspecified reference to 'the Scriptures'" (plural), 275, an explanation which explains nothing. The proposed solutions are in P.H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (NT Suppl., 18), 1967, 97-104. See H.L. Strack - P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I *Das Evangelium Matthaei*, 1992, 92-94.

14.67: καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. In Lk 18.37 (the blind man of Jericho), ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος παρέρχεται is the correction of Mk 10.47: ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός ἐστίν.

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The disappearance of Ναζαρηνός is documented in John and in Acts, in which only Ναζωραῖος is found. Neither of the two terms in question ever occurs elsewhere in the New Testament.

In Jn 18.5-7 (Jesus' arrest), at the approach of the cohort (σπεῖρα) led by Judas, Jesus asks: τίνα ζητεῖτε; and receives the answer Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον. Jesus' question and the answer are repeated at verse 7.

The *titulus* of the cross is given in Jn 19.19: Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. The formula is clearly a development of the Synoptic form: ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Mk 15.26); οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Mt 27.37); ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος (Lk 23.38). The early second century was conversant with the expression Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος, but for the author of John it perhaps had no meaning or importance.

The use of the term in Acts also reveals a late stage of the tradition. In the speech on Pentecost at 2.22 Peter, speaking of Jesus, says: Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ; at 6.14 the scribes and elders state that Stephen has affirmed ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος κ.τ.λ.; at 22.8, the speech in the Temple court, Paul recounts his vision on the road to Damascus: Jesus appeared to him and εἶπέν τέ πρός με, ἐγὼ εἶμι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὃν σὺ διώκεις. In the account of the episode Jesus merely says: ἐγὼ εἶμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις (9.5): the appellative therefore has a *purely decorative function*. This is confirmed by two passages (3.6 and 4.10) in which the expression Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ Ναζωραῖος is used in the context of the exorcism formula ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου (cf. ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ ἐκβάλλειν δαιμόνια, Mk 9.38; 16.17; Lk 9.49). Before Agrippa Paul confirms that he was forced to act πρός τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου (26.9).⁶

Acts, however, contains evidence that the Jerusalem Christians were referred to as Ναζωραῖοι. In 24.5 Tertullus, a lawyer (ῥήτωρ, *orator, causidicus*), speaking in the name of the High Priest Ananias, accuses Paul before the procurator Felix of being ὁ πρωτοστάτης τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως. Acts 11.26 also states χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς.⁷

⁶ W. Heitmüller, "Im Namen Jesu". *Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament, speziell zur altchristlichen Taufe* (FRLANT, 2), 1903.

⁷ H.J. Cadbury, "Names for Christians and Christianity in Acts" in *Beginnings I*, 5, 1933, 375-392: 383-386 and 386-387; A. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte... erklärt*, 7., durchgesehene und verb., Auflage (Krit.-exeg. Komm. über das NT III, 16. Auflage), 1977, 350-358 and 628-631; E.J. Bickermann, "The Name of Christians", *HThR* 42, 1945, 109-124 = *Studies in Jewish and Christian History III*, 1983, 139-151.

Now, if the denomination Ναζωραῖοι used for the Christians in Jerusalem, as opposed to Χριστιανοί, used in Antioch, is connected with the appellative Ναζωραῖος used for Jesus, it must equally be interconnected with the information given by Epiphanius (*panar. haer.* XXIX, 5, 4-7) whereby a group of Ἐσσαιῶν, i.e. Essenes (of whom Philo speaks in a book expressly dedicated to them), had heard the name of Jesus, witnessed the miracles performed by the Apostles, and became Christians under the name Ναζωραῖοι, “having heard that in Nazareth he had been conceived in the womb and nourished in the house of Joseph, and that for this reason Jesus is called Ναζωραῖος in the Gospel, as the Apostles state: ‘Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs’ [Acts 2.22] and took this name from him, τὸ καλεῖσθαι Ναζωραῖος, οὐχὶ Ναζιραῖος, τὸ ἐρμηνευόμενον ἡγιασμένους to be called Ναζωραῖοι, and not Ναζιραῖοι, which means ‘sanctified’”. Epiphanius therefore affirms that Ναζωραῖος means “of Nazareth”, and not, *as someone must have stated*, “holy”, “sanctified” (ἅγιος; ἡγιασμένος).⁸ It should be observed that, while the collective noun Ναζωραῖοι is justifiable if Ναζωραῖος means “holy”, it is considerably less so if Ναζωραῖος means “man of Nazareth”.

II

These, then, are the premises. I shall now briefly summarise the various critical interpretations of the two terms: either one or both of which derive

- a) from Nazareth, the village in Galilee in which Jesus was born (Mk 1.9);
- b) from the verb נָצַר, “to guard” and “to observe”;
- c) from the name of a pre-Christian sect or group afterwards applied to Jesus;
- d) from the noun נִצָּר, “shoot”;
- e) from the verb נָדַר, “to consecrate”, “to separate”.

a) from Nazareth, the village in Galilee in which Jesus was born (Mk 1.9); G. Foot Moore, “Nazarene and Nazareth” in *Beginnings of Christianity*. Part I *The Acts of the Apostles*, edited by F.J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, I, 1, London 1920, 426-432 (Appendix B); H.J. Cadbury, “The Titles of Jesus in Acts”, *ibid.*, I, 5 (1933), 354-375: 356-357; Ed. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums II Die Entwicklung des Judentums und Jesus von Nazareth*, Stuttgart-Berlin 1921, 423, note 2 (on this see M. Lidzbarski, “Nazoraios”, *Zeitschr. f. Semitistik* 1 [1922], 230-233); Strack-Billerbeck (see note 5): “Ναζαρηνός ist von der Namensform Ναζαρά gebildet ... während Ναζωραῖος entweder eine (nicht

⁸ The reference is undoubtedly to the naziriteship. Epiphanius then goes on to say: “For this title of honor was borne in the past by the first-born children who were sanctified to God. Samson belonged to them, and others after him and also many before him”. Cf. A.F. Klijn - H.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (NT Suppl. 36), 1973, 44-52; R.A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity. From the End of the New Testament Period until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Studia Postbiblica, 37), 1988, 39-42.

nachweisbare) Namensform Ναζωρά voraussetzt oder, was wahrscheinlicher, von mundartlichem נִצְרָא beeinflusst ist", 94; W.F. Albright, "The Topography of the Tribe of Issachar", *ZAW* 44 (1926), 225-236: 230; *id.*, "The Names 'Nazareth' and 'Nazoraean'", *JBL* 65 (1946), 397-401 (reply to J.S. Kennard Jr., "Was Capernaum ...", see *sub e/3* below); W.O.E. Oesterley, "Nazarene and Nazareth", *ET* 52 (1940-41), 410-412; H.H. Schäfer in *ThWNT* IV (1942), 878-884 *s.v.* Ναζαρηνός-Ναζωραῖος (basically a philological refutation of Lidzbarski [see *sub b/1*]: the ω in Ναζωραῖος is the transcription of a šewâ simplex, in which case Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρηνός can legitimately be considered Greek forms of the Aramaic ܢܫܪܝܢܐ, deriving from ܢܫܪܐ, Ναζαρέθ); H.M. Shires, "The Meaning of the Term 'Nazarene'", *Angl. Theol. Rev.* 27 (1947), 19-27; A. Sanders, "Ναζωραῖος in Matth. 2.23", *JBL* 84 (1965), 169-172 (reply to Ed. Schweizer, "Er wird Nazoräer ...", see *sub e/3*); H.P. Rüger, "N A Z A P E Θ / N A Z A P A - N A Z A P H N O Σ / N A Z Ω P A I O Σ", *ZNW* 72 (1981) 257-263; A. Diez Macho, "Jésus 'ho nazoraios'", in *Bibliotheca Salmanticensis Estudios* 39. *Quaere Paulum. Miscelánea homenaje a Monseñor Dr. Lorenzo Turrado*, Salamanca 1981, 9-26; Davies-Allison (see note 5): "there is no insuperable difficulty in accepting a derivation of Ναζωραῖος from Ναζαρέθ or its Semitic equivalent ... so it seems more prudent to accept the simplest solution Ναζωραῖος = ὁ ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ", 281; Ch. Rabin, "Nošerim", *Textus. Annual of Hebrew Univ. Bible Project* 5 (1966), 44-52 makes a clear distinction between Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωραῖος, the former referring to the city of Nazareth (Ναζαρετ), 49; on the latter, see *sub b/3*.

b) from the verb נִצַּר, "to guard" and "to observe" (the precepts), the Ναζωραῖοι being either (1) the "observants", or (2) "those who are guarded", (3) "those who guard", and (4) "those who keep a religious secret": Accadian *našarū*, *naširu*.

(1) According to M. Lidzbarski, "Mandäische Liturgien mitgeteilt und erklärt von M.L." (*Abhandl. der königl. Gesellschaft der Wissensch. zu Göttingen. Phil.-hist. Klasse* NF XVII, 1), Berlin 1920, XVI-XIX; *Ginza. Der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer*, übersetzt und erklärt von M.L. (*Quellen der Religionsgeschichte* 13), Göttingen-Leipzig 1925, IX-X; *id.*, "Nazoraios" (see *sub a*), Ναζωραῖος is the equivalent of נִצְרָא, "einer aus dem Kreise der Observanten". The term used for Jesus in the *Talmud*, נִצְרָא [bAZ 17a = tHull 2.24; bBerak 17a (in the Codex Monac.); bSanh 103a; see J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung (Erträge der Forschung* 82), Darmstadt, 62-68, 138-143 and *passim*], attests to its original Hebrew form, from the verb נִצַּר, in the sense of "to observe" (precepts and orders), used in the more recent writings of the Old Testament (particularly in Ps 119) in place of שָׁמַר which has the same meaning in the older books. Those Jews who considered themselves obliged to observe particular precepts were called נִצְרָא, "observants", the singular of which is נִצְרָא: the use of the form with *i relativum*, נִצְרָא, indicates that the נִצְרָא had come to form part of an organised community of "observants". Since in Palestine, however, Aramaic was spoken, נִצְרָא became נַצְרֵינָא, or נַצְרֵינָא = Ναζωραῖος. Consequently "Jesus wird aus dem Kreise der נִצְרָא hervorgegangen sein, und dieser Beiname ist ihm

geblieben”, just as the terms *Ναζωραῖοι* and *Νασαραῖοι* have continued to be used for a number of Judaeo-Christian groups. According to ancient sources the Mandaeans were also called *מאצורי*, a term *not taken from the Christians*. (For a dissenting opinion on this, see Th. Nöldeke, *Zeitschr. f. Assyrl.* 33 [1921], 73-74.)

(2) E. Lohmeyer, *Gottesknecht und Davidsohn (Symbolae Bibl. Uppsal. 5)*, Kopenhagen 1945; (FRLANT, NF 43 [61]), Berlin 1953², 42 ff., maintains that Mt 2.23 refers to Is 42.6 (the song of the Servant): “I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by hand and kept you, *וָאֶצְרָךְ*, I have given you as a Covenant to the people ...”. This reasoning is developed by B. Gärtner, “Die rätselhaften Termini Nazoräer und Iskariot, I Nazareth, Nazoräer und das Mandäertum”, *Horae Soederblomianae* 4 (1957), 5-36, who gives the term *Ναζωραῖος* as deriving from *נָצַר*, the passive participle of the verb *נָצַר*: “to restore the *preserved*, *נָצַרְתִּי*, of Israel, (by God)...” (Is 49.6), where he sees an allusion to the “rest of Israel”, 14 ff.; D.B. Taylor, “Jesus - of Nazareth?”, *ET* 92 (1981), 336b-337b.

(3) E. Zolli, “Nazarenus vocabitur”, *ZAW* 49 (1958), 135-136, maintains that Mt 2.23 is quoting Jr 31.6 “For there shall be a day, that the *watchmen*, *נָצַרִים*, upon the mount Ephraim shall cry...”. As regards *Ναζωραῖος*, Rabin (see *sub a*) writes: “Finally we can, on the basis of our findings, make a contribution to the interpretation of Mt. 2:23, where it has long been suspected that *Ναζωραῖος* represents a reference to *nēšer* in some OT verse, only that no suitable verse came to hand. I would suggest that the verse in question is Is 60:21 *וְעַמֶּךָ כֻּלָּם צַדִּיקִים* (Q: *מטעו מטעו נצר ארץ ירשו לעולם* quoted with definite Messianic intent in CDC 1.7. G. reads *φυλάσσω*, *i.e. nōšērīm*, and it is easy to understand ‘he who guards the plant’ as a reference to the Messiah. Once *nōšērīm* had been accepted as a name for the Church, a Midrash connecting a Biblical designation of the Messiah both with the name of the community and with the name of Jesus’ birthplace must have been most welcome. On the other hand the form in *-aios* is a clear pointer to the fact that the name of the community came first, and that *Ναζαρηνός* as a gentilic of Jesus was only changed into *Ναζωραῖος* as a consequence of this Midrash”, 52.

(4) Zimmern, “Nazoräer (Nazarener)”, *ZDMG* 74 (1920), 429-438; *id.*, “Babylonische Vorstufen der vorderasiatischen Mysterienreligionen?”, *ibid.* 76 (1922), 36-54: 45-46, maintains that *Ναζωραῖος* should be seen in connection with the Accadian *našāru*, *nāširu* (Hebrew *נָצַר*, “to guard”, “der technische Ausdruck für das Hüten göttlichen Geheimwissens durch die dafür Berufenen”, 45, a term used to denote specific groups belonging to Judaism, and associated with both the sect of the *Ναζωραῖοι* mentioned in Acts 24.5, and that of the Mandaeans (*מאצורי*)).

c) from the name of a pre-Christian sect or group afterwards applied to Jesus, an hypothesis formulated chiefly on the basis of Epiphanius’ statement according

to which (*panar. haer.*, XXIX, 6.1) there existed a pre-Christian Jewish sect of the Ναζωραῖοι.

This hypothesis (cf. also those advanced by Lidzbarski and Zimmern) is characteristic of early twentieth-century scholars such as W.B. Smith, A. Drews, and others, who denied the historicity of the figure of Jesus. W.B. Smith, “Meaning of the Epithet Nazorean (Nazorene)”, *The Monist* (Chicago) 15 Jan. 1905, 40ff.; *id.*, *Der vorchristliche Jesus. Vorstudien zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums*, 2. Aufl. Jena 1911 (1. Giessen 1906): 42-70: “Die Bedeutung des Beinamens Nazoräus” (no English original seems ever to have appeared).

d) from the noun נָצַר, “shoot”, taking Is 11.1 as the “prophecy” cryptically mentioned in Mt 2.23. This is the traditional hypothesis, נָצַר being the synonym of צִמָּח in Is 4.2 and Jr 23.5.

In his commentary on Isaiah (PL, 24, 148) Jerome had already underlined its philological difficulties: “Et pro flore qui Hebraice dicitur NESER, germen, transtulerunt, ut ostenderent, quod multo post tempore Babyloniace captivitatis, nullo de stirpe David antiqui regni gloriam possidente, quasi de trunco Maria, et de Maria Christus exortus sit. Illud quod in evangelio Matthaei omnes quaerunt Ecclesiastici, et non inveniunt ubi scriptum sit, *Quoniam Nazaraeus vocabitur* (2.23), eruditi Hebraeorum de hoc loco assumptum putant. Sed sciendum quod hic NESER per SADE litteram scribatur: cuius proprietatem et sonum inter z et s Latinus sermo non exprimit. Est enim stridulus, et strictis dentibus vix linguae impressione profertur: ex qua etiam Sion urbs scribitur. Porro Nazaraei, quos LXX *sanctificatos*, Symmachus *separatos* transtulerunt, per ZAIN semper scribuntur elementum”; W. Caspari, “ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ Mt 2.23 nach alttestamentlichen Voraussetzungen”, *ZNW* 21 (1922), 122-127; G.H. Box, “The Value and Significance of the Old Testament in Relation to the New”, in *The People of the Book*, ed. A.S. Peake, Oxford 1925, 433-467: 440; P.A. Medebielle, “*Quoniam Nazaraeus vocabitur* (Mt II, 23)”, *Studia Anselmiana* 27-28 (1951), 301-326; J.G. Rembry, “*Quoniam Nazaraeus vocabitur* (Mt 2/23)”, *SBFLA* 12 (1961-62), 46-65.

e) from the verb נָזַר, “to consecrate”, “to separate”, or, more precisely: (1) from the noun נֶזֶר “crown”, the sign of consecration, Lv 21, 12; (2) from the noun נָזִיר in the sense of “consecrated person (= prince) among one’s brothers”: Gn 49.26 = Dt 33.16, cf. Lm 4.7 and Tertullianus, *adv Marc* IV, 8; or (3) in the sense of “consecrated”, “a Nazirite”, Jdg 13.5,7; 16.17b, where Samson (LXX) defines himself as a נָזִיר in the words ἅγιος θεοῦ ἐγώ εἰμι ἀπὸ κοιλίας μητρός μου.

(1) The above-quoted passage from Jerome demonstrates that this interpretation was already current in ancient Christian exegesis: Eusebius, for example, in *demonstr euang* II 2, PG 22, 549 connects Mt 2.23 with נָזִיר in Lv 21.12.

(2) H. Smith, “Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται”, *JThS* 28 (1926-27), 60, maintains that the passage alluded to in Mt 2.23 is Gn 49.26 = Dt 33.16, where Joseph is called נָזִיר “separate”, “consecrated”, “prince” among his brothers. In Gn the LXX give ὧν ἠγήσατο ἀδελφῶν, and in Dt δοξασθεῖς ἀδελφοῖς, while in Lm 4.7, the only other place where נָזִיר is not used in the technical sense of “Nazirite”, LXX give Ναζειραῖοι.

(3) The Tyndale Bible NT from the second edition (1534); the Coverdale Bible (1539) and the Geneva Bible (1560) translate Ναζωραῖος of Mt 2.23 with “Nazirite” and the marginal reference is to “Judges 13” (Barnes Tatum, “Matth. 2.23” [see note 1], 137); Bern. Seb. Cremer, *Dissertatio de Jesu Nazoraeo publice dicta die 13. Aprilis MDCCXVII...* Harderovici [Harderwijk a.d. Zuiderzee] 1718, makes a distinction between Ναζαρηνός, “id est Nazarethae incola”, and Ναζωραῖος “antitypos scilicet Naziraeorum Veteris Testamenti”. According to L. Salvatorelli, “Il significato di Nazareno”, *La cultura contemporanea* 3 (1911), 44-51; 90-94; 155-168; 284-296 (cf. H. von Soden in *ThLZ* 37 [1912], 636-637), the two epithets for Jesus characterise an *intrinsic* quality, as is evident in Mk 1.24, where Ναζαρηνός is interpreted as ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, an expression also found in Jdg 16.17b, when, in the LXX, Samson defines himself as a נָזִיר in the words ἅγιος θεοῦ ἐγώ εἰμι ἀπὸ κοιλίας μητρὸς μου. This hypothesis is also considered (but only as “a desperate conjecture”) in F.C. Burkitt’s “The Syriac Forms of the New Testament Proper Names”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 5 (1911-12), 374-408: 394; J.S. Kennard Jn., “Was Capernaum the Home of Jesus?”, *JBL* 65 (1946), 131-141; *id.*, “Nazorean and Nazareth”, *JBL* 66 (1947), 79-81 (in reply to Albright, “The Name ...” [see *sub a*]); Ed. Schweizer, “Er wird Nazoräer heissen (Zu Mc. 1.24 und Mt. 2.23)” in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche. Festschrift J. Jeremias (BZNW 26)*, Berlin, 1964, 90-93; E. Zuckschwerdt, “Nazoraios in Matth. 2.23”, *ThZ* 31 (1975), 65-77; G. Allan, “He shall be called — a Nazirite?”, *ET* 95 (1983), 81b-82b.

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The basic objection to this last explanation of the two terms is neatly put by Gärtner in these words: “Dennoch sprechen gewichtige Gründe gegen diese These. Wie gelangt man zu dem langen ὀ-Laut in Ναζωραῖος? Und wo in den Evangelien wird Jesus als Nasir dargestellt? Nicht eines der üblichen Kennzeichen für einen Nasir begegnet uns in der Schilderung”.⁹

The “philological” objection is probably not insurmountable, while the historical one appears, at least initially, totally convincing. It is true that, of all the figures of first century AD Judaism, the נָזִיר is the least comparable with the Jesus described in the Synoptics. Furthermore, in Jesus’ day the naziritiship was a one-month vow of unbroken purity, including abstinence from wine, at the end of which the hair, rigorously untouched during the month, was to be shaved. Salvatorelli’s hypothesis of the continuing existence, in the first century AD, of communities of נָזִירִים (which could, however, have existed in the eighth century

⁹ Gärtner, “Nazareth, Nazoräer”, 10.

BC — cf. Am 2.11-12 — as did communities of prophets) is totally unacceptable and unfounded. Schweizer is equally unable to furnish solid support. He states: “Für die Entstehung des Titels ‘Nazoräer’ ... sind also beide Möglichkeiten denkbar: a) solche Betrachtung Jesu nach dem Vorbild alttestamentlicher Nasiräer (analog Sir 46.13 für Samuel), führte dazu, ihn als ‘Nasiräer = Heiligen Gottes’, zu bezeichnen, wobei die Verbindung zu Nazaret erst ein späteres Stadium der Entwicklung ausmachte; b) der Anklang der Herkunftsbezeichnung ‘Nazarener’ an ‘Nasiräer’ führte sekundär dazu, Jesus im Lichte von Jdc 16.17 als ‘Heiligen Gottes’ zu verstehen”.¹⁰ To this one may object that a) according to the OT account (1 Sm 1.11) Samuel is conceived as consecrated to the divinity, and thus effectively a נָזִיר (“and there shall no razor come upon his head” 1.11; “I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink”, 1.15), *even if the actual term is not used*, whereby Sir 46.13 can use the appellative explicitly, נָזִיר = LXX: προφήτης κυρίου while nothing of the kind is said (*or seems to be said*) of Jesus; b) the Synoptic tradition equates Ναζαρηνός with ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ at its more archaic levels, while the equation Ναζωπαῖος = “of Nazareth” is found at more recent levels, clearly revealing that the compiler of Matthew was merely attempting to explain a term he had found within the tradition, but the meaning of which he no longer understood.

In other words, the objection that the figure of Jesus is not comparable with that of a נָזִיר can also be brought against Schweizer, but could reveal itself as lacking sufficient foundation.

III

There exists another possible way of connecting the terms Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωπαῖος with the naziritiship, which I shall now illustrate in the conviction that it may assist in the discussion of the problem, if not, as we shall see, in its solution.

In the New Testament, the only person assigned characteristics of a נָזִיר is John the Baptist; they concern, however, not his life and activities, but *exclusively his conception*. Lk 1.5-25 gives the account of the Baptist’s conception, and in the following verses, 26-38, that of Jesus. Luke, who considers John a relative of Jesus (at 1.36 Elizabeth is called Mary’s συγγενίς), gives the two events as parallel. Both are extraordinary, but also very different.¹¹

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The Pentateuch and the historical books cite several cases of extraordinary conceptions, such as those of Isaac (Gn 21.1-2), Jacob and Esau (Gn 25.21), and

¹⁰ Schweizer, “Er wird Nazoräer ...”, 93.

¹¹ On the Baptist, see: M. Dibelius, *Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer* (FRLANT, 15), 1932; E. Bammel, “John the Baptist in Early Christian Traditions”, *NTS* 18, 1971-72, 95-128; W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Society of NT Studies, Monograph Series, 7), 1968.

Joseph (Gn 30.22-24), or those of Samson (Jdg 13.2-24) and Samuel (1 Sm 1.9-20), which have their own distinctive characteristics.

Behind all these episodes is the idea that conception (הַרְיִינָן, Gn 3.16; Hos 9.11; Ruth 4.13) always depends on the divinity, who “closes” (Gn 20.18; 1 Sm 1.5) and “opens” (Gn 29.31, 30.22) the woman’s womb. When Boaz “went in unto” Ruth, “the Lord gave her conception” (Ruth 4.13). Sterility is a punishment of Yahweh, and conception by a sterile or elderly woman only the result of the divinity’s *extraordinary* intervention, which Hebrew renders with the verb בָּקַד, “to take care of”, “to visit” (Gn 21.1; Jr 15.15), in Greek ἐπισκεπέτομαι (Lk 1.68), or the verb זָכַר, “to remember” (1 Sm 1.19; Jr 15.15).¹²

The special factor in the cases of Samson and Samuel is that both are נְזִירִים consecrated from their mother’s womb and therefore from the same moment, like their mothers, bound by certain taboos. This is the specific reason why, in the case of Samson, an angel appears to the woman and her husband and, on announcing the imminent conception, orders her to abstain from wine and fermented drink.

In the case of Samuel it is the woman herself who offers to consecrate the resulting son if her sterility is cured: “She made this vow: O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, than I will set him before you until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants and no razor shall touch his head” (1 Sm 1.11). A late passage, this reflects the naziriteship’s assumption of the nature of the vow as it stands in Nm 6.2-21 (P), but which it did not have in the Samson episode.¹³

Now, if we read the “annunciation” of the Baptist (Lk 1.5-25), we immediately realise that the passage’s literary model is Chap. 13 of Judges, the “annunciation” of Samson: a just man has a sterile wife (Lk 1.7); the angel of Yahweh (or the angel of the Lord) appears, in Samson’s case to the woman, and in John’s to the father, Zacharias, announcing the imminent conception; in both, the human being is frightened by the angel’s visit. Samson’s mother is ordered by the angel not to drink wine or fermented drinks “for the child shall be a Nazarite, נְזִיר, unto God from the womb”, מִן-הַבֶּטֶן, ἀπὸ τῆς κοιλίας (Jdg 13.5); John the Baptist’s parents are told to rejoice in the child’s birth: ἔσται γὰρ

¹² G. Widengren, “Hieros gamos och underjordsvistelse. Studier till det sakrala kungadömet i Israel”, *Religion och Bibel* 7, 1948, Nathan Söderblom—Sällskapetets Årsbok, 17-46: 31-33; J. Scharbert, “Das Verbum PQD in der Theologie des Alten Testaments”, *BZ n.F.* 4, 1960, 209-226; G. André, *Determining the Destiny. PQD in the Old Testament (Coniectanea Biblica — Old Testament Series 16)*, 1980, 207-208; *id.*, in *ThWAT* VI, 1989, 708-723: 717, s.v. פָּקַד; F. Parente, “Die Ursprünge des Naziräats”, in *Biblische und judaistische Studien. Festschrift für Paolo Sacchi*, herausg. von A. Vivian, 1990, 65-83: 79, n. 7. About הַרְיִינָן, see M. Ottosson in *ThWAT* II, 1977, 495-499, s.v. הָרָה.

¹³ Parente (n. 12), 66-68.

μέγας ἐνώπιον [του] κυρίου, καὶ οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πίη, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ (Lk 1.15).

The Hebrew expression *מִן־הַיַּיִן וְהַיַּיִן מִן־הַיַּיִן* (LXX: ὅτι ναζὶρ θεοῦ ἔσται τὸ παιδάριον ἀπὸ τῆς κοιλίας) thus becomes πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ. *יֵינֵן*, that is, means “filled with the Holy Spirit”.

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At Mark 1.9-11, Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan by John the Baptist marks the beginning of his public life. When he emerges from the water, “he saw, εἶδεν, the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending on him, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστεράν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν; and there came, ἐγένετο (8^c, A, B *etc.*), a voice from heaven [a בַּה קוֹל], saying, Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased” (1.11).¹⁴ What the passage represents is an adoptionist Christology totally in keeping with Jewish conceptions. The “Spirit of the Lord”, יהוה רוח, πνεῦμα κυρίου of LXX, “comes upon” Samson when he is to perform extraordinary feats (Jdg 14.6, 19), “was upon” Othniel (Jdg 3.10) and Jephthah (Jdg 11.29), “clothed” Gideon (Jdg 6.34). All of them perform some action or *are* something (judges or prophets) whenever they are “filled with the Spirit”. In this the prophet is a paradigm, Hosea (9.7) defining himself as a אִישׁ אֶת־רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, a “man with the spirit within him”. “Inspired” is badly inadequate, the LXX translating it much more effectively as ἀνθρωπος ὁ πνευματοφόρος.¹⁵

Just as the spirit possesses the individual, so it “departs from”, סָר, him. “The Spirit of the Lord departed from (מֵעַם = from with) Saul” (1 Sm 16.14). In the same way, when Delilah cuts off Samson’s hair, “his strength left him” (Jdg 16.19), the compiler of the text adding: “but he did not know that the Lord had left him” (16.20). The history of Samson as we find it in Judges is the result of compilation work which has superimposed the figure of a hero performing his feats *when and because* he is possessed by the divinity onto the older concept of a man “consecrated” to the divinity *from his conception*; his “strength”, כֹּחַ, is a *constant* factor, and therefore to cut his hair would be a profanation, the hair too being full of “strength”, i.e. divinity. For the same reason, it was forbidden to cut the stones of the altar, in which the divinity was originally considered inher-

¹⁴ On Jesus’ baptism in Mk 1.9-11, see: Gunkel (n. 4), 70; H. Gressmann, “Die Sage von der Taufe Jesu und die vorderorientalische Taubengöttin”, *ARW* 20, 1920-21, 1-40; 323-359; F. Baumgärtel in *ThWNT* VI, 1959, 357-366, s.v. πνεῦμα; F. Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern (Frankfurter Theol. Studien 4)*, 1970.

¹⁵ B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments I. Die Religion Israels und die Entstehung des Judentums (Grund. der Wiss. Theol. II, 2, 1)*, 1905, 99-100 (§ 43); J. Pedersen, *Israel. Its Life and Culture III-IV*, 1940 (first Danish ed., 1934), 491-498: “When the spirit of Yahweh embodied itself in Gideon and stirred in Samson (Jdg 6.34; 13.25) these heroes had a divine soul; hence they were divine”, 492.

ent (Ex 20.25; Dt 27.6; Js 8.29-31).¹⁶ Samson loses his vital force for this reason, and not because Yahweh “departs” from him.

In ancient Israel there were two kinds of *personae sacrae*: those temporarily possessed by the divinity, and those with permanent, inherent holiness, שֶׁקֶד. Of the latter kind, the נָזִיר קִשְׁמֹשׁוֹן (mNazir 1.2), sanctified from his mother’s womb, was the most typical. I have elsewhere attempted an explanation of this (very archaic) concept, which I believe to derive from the fact that the first-born, no longer sacrificed and ransomed, remained a *persona sacra*, and as such surrounded by a series of taboos, including that of fermented drink and the cutting of hair (and nails). *He was necessarily so from his mother’s womb.*¹⁷

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When Jesus is baptised and receives the Spirit, he becomes, in Mark, an אִישׁ קִרְיָא, to the extent that the Spirit leads him into the desert immediately (Mk 1.12). He is a man temporarily possessed by the Spirit, and will preserve obvious traces of it even once radically changed. When the woman with a blood flow touches Jesus, he perceives ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξεληθοῦσαν (Mk 5.30). On the cross (Mk 15.34; Mt 27.47) Jesus cries: Ελωι Ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι (Aram. אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לֵמָא סַבְחָתַי [Targ.], Hebr. עֲזַבְתַּי), a quotation from Ps 22(21),2 translated ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί (LXX ἵνα τί) ἐγκατέλιπές με; in *euang. Petri*, 19.10 he says ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις [μου] κατέλειψας με, which has an exact parallel in Ps 38,11 עָזַבְנִי כָחַי, see also Mt 27.50: ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα and Jn 19.30: παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα.

In the Synoptic tradition, the figure of Jesus undergoes a profound transformation, however, a concrete example of which is the way in which he receives the Spirit and, consequently, *when* he receives it. The development from the moment of reception onwards is clearly one of regression.

The most correct way of reconstructing this is first to establish the point of departure and the point of arrival. The former is Mk 1.10-11, which describes an *adult* Jesus receiving the Spirit as it had been received by so many others in the Old Testament. The point of arrival is recounted in Mt 1.20, when, in Joseph’s dream, the angel says: “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἁγίου: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”. This is no more the Hebrew world, where the extraordinary conception has been made possible but is not *performed* by the divinity, and where the Messiah is always an ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων (Iust. *dial.*, 49.1).

Luke 1.35 seems to adopt a position somewhere between the two. Here the angel tells Mary: πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον [ἐκ σοῦ: C, Θ] ἅγιον κληθήσεται,

¹⁶ Stade, *Theologie*, 114-115 (§ 55); G. Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament. Its Theory and Practice*, 1925, 125-129; Parente (n. 12), 73-74 and notes 18-19.

¹⁷ Parente (n. 12), 74-78 and notes 22-23.

υἱὸς θεοῦ, i.e. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, since he who shall be born (of you) shall be called ‘holy’; the Son of God”. Most commentators take this to mean that Jesus is a divine being, but this is actually due to *modifications successively made to Luke’s text*. In 1891 Hillmann maintained he had demonstrated that the sentence had been interpolated in a Judaeo-Christian text where Jesus is always an ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; in 1901 Harnack adduced arguments of some weight to prove that verses 34 and 35 were not in the original.¹⁸ While the sentence is deliberately ambiguous, however, its component parts are all Jewish, and all clearly recognisable. The “overshadowing by the Highest” is a quotation from Ps 91 (90), 1: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of Eliyon (= LXX: ὑψιστος) under the shadow of Saddyay”; for God’s “power”, “strength”, see Ps 65 (64), 7, “By your strength, you established the mountains”.

The ambiguity also derives from the fact that the final expression is open to at least two further translations: “he who shall be born (shall be) holy and shall be called the Son of God”, and “the holy man who shall be born shall be called ‘the son of God’”. This expression (υἱὸς θεοῦ), however, which Sahlin considers a later gloss is equally undecisive.¹⁹ In Ps 2.7 (quoted in Acts 4.25-26), Yahweh tells the king, a descendant of David, his “anointed” (מָשִׁיחַ, 2.2): “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”: cf. also 2 Sm 7.14 (the so-called “dynastic oracle”): “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (about Solomon and applied to Jesus in Acts 13.33); in the baptism scene in Mk 1.11, the voice from heaven says: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός.

It is not, therefore, certain that Lk 1.35 is stating that Jesus is a divine being, *although there can be no doubt of the fact given that Mary is not sterile, but a virgin* (1.27), because she was yet promised (Lk 1.27: Gabriel was sent πρὸς

¹⁸ J. Hillmann, “Die Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu nach Lukas kritisch untersucht”, *JPTH* 17, 1891, 192-261: 213-224; H. Harnack, “Zu Lc I, 34.35”, *ZNW* 2, 1901, 53-57.

¹⁹ H. Sahlin, *Der Messias und das Gottesvolk. Studien zur protolukanischen Theologie* (Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis, 12), 1945, 121-136. Sahlin does not accept Hillmann’s and Harnack’s total athetesis of verses 34 and 35, and considers the expression ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ secondary for grammatical reasons: “Protolukanischen Ursprungs sind also, m.E., nur die Worte τὸ γεννώμενον ἄγιον κληθήσεται”, 129-133: 132. For the expressions: “will be great”, “he will be called Son of the Most High” (both in Lk 1.32) and “he will be called Son of God” (Lk 1.35), see 4Q 246, the so-called “Son of God Text”: E. Puech, “Fragment d’une Apocalypse en Araméen (4Q 246 = pseudo Dan^d) et le ‘Royaume de Dieu’”, *RB* 99, 1992, 98-131 (with the edition of the text); J.J. Collins, “The Son of God Text from Qumran”, *From Jesus to John. Essays... in Honour of M. de Jonge*, ed. M.C. De Boer (*Journal for the Study of NT. Suppl. Series*, 84), 1993, 65-82; E. Puech, “Notes sur le Fragment d’Apocalypse 4Q 246 - ‘Le Fils de Dieu’”, *RB* 101, 1994, 533-588. For the use of ‘Son of God’ in the Old Testament, see P.A.M. de Boer, “The Son of God in the Old Testament”, *OTS*, 18, 1973, 188-201.

παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρί; cf. 2.5 and Mt 1.18) to Joseph. Joseph, however, has become totally redundant in the story he is part of; in consequence, *the narrative in Luke is the modification of a different version in which Joseph is still Jesus' father.*

This story is constructed on the model of the “annunciation” of Samson’s conception, regularly applied only a few verses previously in the same chapter to the conception of the Baptist. All the traditional elements are here: the announcing angel, the father, the *sterile* (στειῖρα, 1.7, because elderly, 1.18) mother, and the new-born child, holy from its mother’s womb (Lk 1.11-15). Since in Luke, however, the Baptist’s *vie cachée* is clearly constructed along the lines of Jesus’ own, it is inevitable to deduce that, in its original formulation, (the so-called Proto-Luke), the annunciation of Jesus’ conception was formulated in the terms in which that of the Baptist is also formulated in the text as it now stands: an angel announces to the husband of a sterile woman that she will conceive a son who, from his mother’s womb, will be filled with the Holy Spirit on account of the special divine favour of his conception.

As Sahlin writes: “Das Interessante ist indessen, dass dem ἄγιον Richt 13:7 im hebräischen Text ein נִיר entspricht. Weil nun der Parallelismus zwischen Richt 13:2-7 und Lk 1:26-35 so augenfällig ist, dürfte man in der Tat damit rechnen können, dass die Übereinstimmung auch das Wort ἄγιον betrifft und dass also im protolukanischen Text hier ein נִיר gestanden hat. Demnach dürfte also der protolukanische Text zu Lk 1:35 so gelautet haben: ועל-כן יקרא הנוצר נִיר. Wenn dem so ist, erweist sich die Aussage als sehr wichtig hinsichtlich des protolukanischen Messias-Bildes”.²⁰

This is the missing link in the chain of development of Synoptic Christology between Mk 1.10-11 and Lk 1.35. It has a very precise meaning, however: the impetus behind this development, *still in a Jewish context*, is not so much the search for an extraordinary conception *as the need to shift as far back as possible* (and thus to the very moment of conception) the Spirit’s descending on Jesus, so that he was never, even pre-natally, a common man, but always an ἄνθρωπος πνευματοφόρος. In other words, *he had to be possessed of the Spirit permanently, not intermittently.* As the angel says to Zacharias: ἔσται γὰρ μέγας ἐνώπιον [τοῦ] κυρίου ... καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ (Lk 1.15). The Hebrew tradition presented the perfect answer in the נִיר: not of the kind still seen in the streets of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day, men who had simply taken a vow to abstain from wine and hair-cutting for one month, but those, as the Mishnah states, “like Samson” (mNazir, 1.2). John’s conception is indeed described like that of Samson (Lk 1.15), as was Jesus’ own, in the proto-Lukan account.

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The jump from the Hebrew world to the Greek occurs, then, between proto-Luke and Luke, since in the latter Mary is not sterile but a virgin, and Joseph is extra-

²⁰ Sahlin (n. 19), 132-133. I would like to thank Joseph Sievers for his assistance and for several helpful suggestions.

neous to the whole event. He cannot, however, simply be eliminated, so Matthew, who makes explicit Luke's still implicit statement that conception was not due to the *indirect* agency of the Spirit, but to his *direct* work: τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματος ἔστιν ἁγίου (1.20), *creates a place for him in the sequel*. Matthew recounts Joseph's dream (1.20-21), quotes Is 7.14 (1.22-23), and concludes that Joseph did as he was ordered: "Joseph took unto him his wife καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, and knew her not till she had brought forth her son" (1.24-25). *Matthew's account exactly reflects a Greek interpretation of an extraordinary conception as recounted by a Jew basing it on the idea of Samson's conception as a נָרִי.*

Diogenes Laertius (*uitae phil.*, III, 2) states that "Speusippus, in a work entitled *Plato's Funeral Banquet*, Clearchus in *Plato's Encomium*, and Anassilaides, in Book II, *On the Philosophers* all affirm that in Athens rumour had it that Aristones had unsuccessfully attempted to take by force a beautiful young woman named Perittionis. Apollo immediately appeared to him in a vision, after which Aristones abstained from all intercourse with her until she had given birth", ὅθεν καθαρὰν γάμου φυλάξει ἕως τῆς ἀποκύσεως. Matthew actually mentions brothers of Jesus' who are obviously Joseph's sons (Mt 12.46 = Mk 3.32; Lk 8.20).

It is for this reason that, in Luke's and Matthew's account of Jesus' conception, Joseph still has a part in events. In later stages of Christology he is to have none whatsoever: in John, Jesus is no longer conceived through the agency of the Holy Spirit, but πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί (8.58): the Christ here pre-exists creation. In this account the figure of Joseph, like that of Mary, has no meaning: she is a mere go-between for the *revelation* of the Christ, who, as the Valentinians put it, διὰ Μαρίας διοδεύσαντα, καθάπερ ὕδωρ διὰ σωλῆνος ὑδεύσε, "per Mariam transierit, quemadmodum aqua per tubum transit" (Iren., *adu. haer.* I, 1.13; 60 Harvey; Adam. *dial. de recta in Deum fide*, PG 11, 1845A; Cyrill. *Jerus.*, *cat.* IV,9, PG 33, 465B-468A; Joh. Chrys. in *Matth. hom.* IV,3 [51], PG 57,43). The only logical and consistent Christology is the docetistic one (2 Jn 7: οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί), and it is not difficult to understand why Judaeo-Christians recognise Jesus' status as the "Son of God", but deny him pre-existence.

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Having considered the above points, it should now be feasible to draw a number of conclusions. It is possible to affirm:

1) that in a Jewish context it was possible to establish a close connection between Jesus the man and the πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ by positing his conception as extraordinary, the possible model for this being provided by Jdg 13.2-24 (Samson's conception as נָרִי);

2) that in this sense, *and in this sense only*, the figure of Jesus was compared with that of a נָרִי;

3) that, in consequence, Jesus was given an appellative which defined him as such, and that this appellative was considered the equivalent of ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ;

4) that this appellative had two forms; *Ναζαρηνός* and *Ναζωραῖος*, precisely as the Essenes had been given the two Greek names Ἐσσαῖοι and Ἐσσηνοί;

5) that in a religious context which was *no longer Jewish*, and which had a totally different idea of the conception of Jesus the man, attempts had been made to eliminate the appellative and promote the “geographical” interpretation, facilitated by the phonetic affinities with the name of Jesus’ birthplace, Nazareth;

6) that the appellative, with its meaning of “holy”, “consecrated”, “filled with the Spirit”, was used to denote the group of Jesus’ closest followers, who were thus called *Ναζωραῖοι*, “holy”, as the members of another Jewish sect were called *ספריים* = *φარიσαῖοι*, i.e. “separate”;

7) that the same term was used later to designate a group of Judaeo-Christians, and used in the other Semitic languages to indicate “Christians” in general.

It is, however, necessary to take into account at least two considerations:

1) the appellative *Ναζαρηνός* is interpreted as *ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ* = *רוח קדוש* by Mark, documenting a phase in the tradition whereby Jesus is still a man who receives the Holy Spirit as an adult, and *in which the idea of extraordinary conception is totally extraneous*;

2) since the Synoptic tradition unequivocally documents the elimination of *Ναζαρηνός* and its replacement by *Ναζωραῖος*, the two appellatives necessarily had — or had to be held to have — different meanings.

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The enigma of Jesus’ double appellative *Ναζαρηνός* and *Ναζωραῖος* cannot, then, be considered solved. An analysis of the Synoptic tradition shows that use of the two terms is extremely limited; that the former was deliberately eliminated and the latter used as a decorative title the meaning of which remained unclear. In other words, the scant elements which the tradition has preserved are not sufficient to furnish a reply which is in any way adequate: the enigma is destined, permanently, to remain precisely that.

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