

Panarion 29- The Nazarenes

Here is the complete text of "Panarion 29" by Epiphanius as it appears in the translation published by Brill.

Against Nazoraeans.

1,1 After these come Nazoraeans, who originated at the same time or even before, or in conjunction with them or after them. In any case they were their contemporaries. I cannot say more precisely who succeeded whom. For, as I said, these were contemporary with each other, and had similar notions.

1,2 For this group did not name themselves Christians or with Jesus' own name, but "Nazoraeans." (3) However, at that time all Christians were called Nazoraeans in the same way. They also came to be called "Jessaean" for a short while, before the disciples began to be called "Christians" at Antioch. (4) But they were called Jessaeans because of Jesse, I suppose, since David was descended from Jesse, but Mary from David's line. This was in fulfillment of sacred scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord tells David, "Of the fruit of thy belly shall I set upon thy throne. "

2,1 At each topic of discussion I am afraid of making its treatment very long .I give this sketch in brief-though the truth makes me anxious to give some indication of the subjects (that arise) in the discussion itself-so as not to cover too much ground in composing the narrative. (2) Since the Lord has told David, "Of the fruit of thy belly shall I set upon the throne," and, "The Lord sware unto David and will not repent," it is plain that God's promise is an irreversible one.

(3) In the first place, what does God have to swear by but "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord?"-for "God hath no oath by a greater." What is divine does not even swear; yet the statement has the function of providing confirmation. For God swore with an oath to David that he would set the fruit of his belly upon his throne. (4) And the apostles bear witness that Christ had to be born of David's seed, as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ indeed was. As I said, I shall pass over most of the testimonies, to avoid a very burdensome discussion.

2,5 But someone will probably say, "Since Christ was physically born of David's seed, that is, of the Holy Virgin Mary, why is he not sitting on David's throne? For the Gospel says, 'They came that they might anoint him king, and when Jesus perceived this he departed.. and hid himself in Ephraim, a city of the wilderness.'" (6) But now that I reach the place for this, and I am asked about this text, and why it is that the prophecy about sitting on David's throne has not been fulfilled physically in the Savior's case-for some have thought that it has not-I shall still say that it is a fact. Not a word of God's holy scripture can come to nothing.

3,1 David's throne and kingly seat is the priesthood in the holy church. The Lord has combined this rank, which is both that of king and high priest, and conferred it on his holy church by transferring David's throne to it, never to fail. (2) Formerly David's throne continued by succession until Christ himself, since the rulers from Judah did not fail until he came "for

whom are the things prepared, and he is the expectation of the nations," scripture says.

3,3 For at Christ's arrival the rulers in succession from Judah came to an end. Until his time rulers < were anointed priests > ' but after his birth in Bethlehem of Judaea the order ended and changed with Alexander, a ruler of priestly and kingly stock (4) After Alexander this heritage from the time of Saana-also known as Alexandra-died out under King Herod and the Roman Emperor Augustus.' (Though Alexander was crowned also, since he was one of the anointed priests and rulers. (5) For with the union of the two tribes, the kingly and priestly-I mean Judah's and Aaron's and the whole tribe of Levi-kings also became priests; nothing based on a hint in holy scripture can be wrong.) (6) But then finally a gentile, King Herod, was crowned, and not David's descendants any more.

3,7 But because of the change in the royal throne, the rank of king passed, in Christ, from the physical house of David and Israel to the church. The throne is established in God's holy church forever, and has both the ranks of king and high-priest for two reasons. (8) The rank of king from our Lord Jesus Christ, also in two ways: because he is descended from King David physically, and because, in Godhead, he is in fact a greater king from all eternity. But the rank of priest because Christ is high priest and chief of high priests (9) since James, called the brother and apostle of the Lord, was made the first bishop immediately. Actually he was Joseph's son, but was said to be in the position of the Lord's brother because they were reared together.

4,1 For James was Joseph's son by Joseph's wife, not May, as I have said, and discussed with greater clarity, in many other places. (2) And moreover I find that he was of Davidic descent because he was Joseph's son, that he was born a Nazirite for he was Joseph's first-born, and hence consecrated." But I find further that he also functioned as a priest in the ancient priesthood. (3) For this reason he was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies once a year, as scripture says the Law commanded the high priests. For many before me Eusebius, Clement and others-have reported this of him. (4) He was allowed to wear the priestly mitre besides, as the trustworthy persons mentioned have testified in the same historical writings.

4,5 Now as I said, our Lord Jesus Christ is "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," and at the same time king after the order on high, and so may transfer the priesthood with its legal charter. (6) But since David's seed through Mary is seated on a throne, endures> forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. He would need now to reposition the former crown; for his kingdom is not earthly, as he said to Pontius Pilate in the Gospel, "My Kingdom is not of this world."" (7) For since Christ fulfills all that was said in riddles, the beginnings have reached a limit. For he who is always king did not come to achieve sovereignty. Lest it be thought that he advanced from a lower estate to a higher, he granted the crown to those whom he appointed. (8) For his throne endures, and there will be no end of his kingdom. And he sits on the throne of David, and has transferred David's crown and granted it, with the high priesthood, to his own servants, the high priests of the catholic church.

4,9 And there is much to say about this. However, since I have come to the reason why those who came to faith in Christ were called Jessaeans before they were called Christians, I have said that Jesse was the father of David. And they had been named Jessaeans, either because of this Jesse; or from the name of our Lord Jesus since, as his disciples, they were derived from Jesus; or because of the etymology of the Lord's name. For in Hebrew Jesus means "healer" or "physician," and "savior." (10) In any case, they had acquired this additional name

before they were called Christians. But at Antioch, as I have mentioned before and as is the essence of the truth, the disciples and the whole church of God began to be called Christians.

5,1 If you enjoy study and have read about them in Philo's historical writings, in his book entitled "Jessaean," you may discover that, in his account of their way of life and hymns, and his description of their monasteries in the vicinity of the Marean marsh, Philo described none other than Christians. (2) For he was edified by his visit to the area-the place is called Mareotis and his entertainment at their monasteries in the region. (3) He arrived during Passover and observed their customs, and how some of them kept the holy week of Passover (only) after a postponement of it, but others by eating every other day though others, indeed, ate each evening. But Philo wrote all this of the faith and regimen of the Christians.

5,4 So in that brief period when they were called Jessaeans-after the Savior's ascension, and after Mark had preached in Egypt-certain other persons seceded," though they were followers of the apostles if you please. I mean the Nazoraeans, whom I am presenting here. They were Jewish, were attached to the Law, and had circumcision. (5) But it was as though people had seen fire under a misapprehension. Not understanding why, or for use, the ones who had kindled this fire were doing it-either to cook their rations with the fire, or burn some dead trees and brush, which are ordinarily destroyed by fire-they kindled fire too, in imitation, and set themselves ablaze.

5,6 For by hearing just the name of Jesus, and seeing the miracles the apostles performed, they came to faith in Jesus themselves. But they found that he had been conceived at Nazareth and brought up in Joseph's home, and for this reason is called "Jesus the Nazoraean" in the Gospel as the apostles say, "Jesus the Nazoraean, a man approved by signs and wonders, " and so on. Hence they adopted this name, so as to be called Nazoreans.

5,7 Not "nazirites"-that means "consecrated persons." Anciently this rank belonged to firstborn sons and men dedicated to God. Samson was one, and others after him, and many before. Moreover, John the Baptist too was one of these persons consecrated to God, for "He drank neither wine nor strong drink." (This regimen, befitting their rank, was prescribed for persons of that sort.) (6,1) They did not call themselves Nasaraeans either; the Nasaraean sect was before Christ, and did not know Christ.

6,2 But besides, as I indicated, everyone called the Christians Nazoraeans, as they say in accusing the apostle Paul, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow and a perverter of the people, a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazoraeans." (3) And the holy apostle did not disclaim the name-not to profess the Nazoraean sect, but he was glad to own the name his adversaries' malice had applied to him for Christ's sake. (4) For he says in court, "They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, nor have I done any of those things whereof they accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I, believing all things in the Law and the prophets ."

6,5 And no wonder the apostle admitted to being a Nazoraean! In those days everyone called Christians this because of the city of Nazareth-there was no other usage of the name then. People thus gave the name of <"Nazoraeans"> to believers in Christ, of whom it is written, "He shall be called a Nazoraean." (6) Even today in fact, people call all the sects, I mean Manichaeans, Marcionites, Gnostics and others, by the common name of "Christians," though they are not Christians. However, although each sect has another name, it still allows

this one with pleasure, since it is honored by the name. For they think they can preen themselves on Christ's name; not on faith and works!

6,7 Thus Christ's holy disciples called themselves "disciples of Jesus" then, as indeed they were. But they were not rude when others called them Nazoraeans, since they saw the intent of those who called them this. They did it because of Christ, since our Lord Jesus was called " Nazoraeen" himself-so say the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles-(8) because of his upbringing in Joseph's home in the city of Nazareth, which is now a village. (Though he was born in the flesh at Bethlehem, of the ever-virgin Mary, Joseph's betrothed. Joseph had settled in Nazareth after leaving Bethlehem and taking up residence in Galilee.)

7,1 But these sectarians whom I am now sketching disregarded the name of Jesus, and did not call themselves Jessaeans, keep the name of Jews, or term themselves Christians-but "Nazoraeans," from the place-name, "Nazareth," if you please! However they are simply complete Jews.

7,2 They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well,; as the Jews do. For unlike the previous sectarians, they do not repudiate the legislation, the prophets, and the books Jews call "Writings." They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion-except for their belief in Christ, if you please! (3) For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things , and declare that God is one, and that his Son is Jesus Christ.

7,4 They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the prophets, and the so-called Writings-I mean the poetic books, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the rest-are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by Jews. (5) They are different from Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Christ; but since they are still fettered by the Law-circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest -they are not in accord with Christians. (6) As to Christ, I cannot say whether they too are captives of the wickedness of Cerinthus and Merinthus, and regard him as a mere man-or whether, as the truth is, they affirm his birth of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

7,7 Today this sect of the Nazoraeans is found in Beroea near Coelesyria, in the Decapolis near Pella, and in Bashanitis at the place called Cocabe-Khokhabe in Hebrew. (8) For that was its place of origin, since all the disciples had settled in Pella after they left Jerusalem Christ told them to abandon Jerusalem and withdraw from it because of its coming siege. And they settled in Peraea for this reason and, as I said, spent their lives there. That was where the Nazoraeen sect began.

8,1 But they too are wrong to boast of circumcision, and persons like themselves are still "under a curse, " since they cannot fulfil the Law. For how can they fulfil the Law's provision, "Thrice a year thou shalt appear before the Lord thy God, at the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Tabernacles and Pentecost," on the site of Jerusalem? (2) As the site is closed off," and the Law's provisions cannot be fulfilled, anyone with sense can see that Christ came to be the Law's fulfiller-not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill the Law-and to lift the curse that had been put on transgression of the Law. (3) For after Moses had given every commandment he came to the point of the book and "included the whole in a curse" with the words, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all the words that are written in this book to do them."

8,4 Hence Christ came to free what had been fettered with the bonds of the curse. In place of the lesser commandments which cannot be fulfilled, he granted us the greater, which are not inconsistent with the completion of the task as the earlier ones were. (5) For I have discussed this many times before, in every Sect, in connection with the Sabbath, circumcision and the rest-how the Lord has granted something more perfect to us.

8,6 But how can people like these defend their disobedience of the Holy Spirit, who has told gentile converts, through the apostles, "Assume no burden save the necessary things, that ye abstain from blood, and from things strangled, and fornication, and from meats offered to idols?" (7) And how can they fail to lose the grace of God, when the holy apostle Paul says, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.. . whosoever of you do glory in the Law are fallen from grace?"

9,1 In this Sect too, my brief discussion will be enough. People like these are refutable at once and easy to cure-or rather, they are nothing but Jews themselves. (2) Yet these are very much the Jews' enemies. Not only do Jewish people have a hatred of them; they even stand up at dawn, at midday, and toward evening, three times a day when they recite their prayers in the synagogues, and curse and anathematize them. Three times a day they say, "God curse the Nazoraeans." (3) For they harbor an extra grudge against them, if you please, because despite their Jewishness, they preach that Jesus is Christ-the opposite of those who are still Jews, for they have not accepted Jesus. 9,4 They have the Gospel according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew . For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written. But I do not know whether they have removed just the genealogies from Abraham to Christ. 9,5 But now that we have also detected this sect like an insect that is small, yet still causes pain with its poison and have squashed it with the words of the truth, let us pray for help from God, beloved, and go to the next.

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