

Patristic references to "Nazarenes"

In the 4th century Jerome also refers to Nazarenes as those "...who accept Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law." In his *Epistle 79*, to Augustine, he said:

"What shall I say of the Ebionites who pretend to be Christians? To-day there still exists among the Jews in all the synagogues of the East a heresy which is called that of the Minæans, and which is still condemned by the Pharisees; [its followers] are ordinarily called 'Nasarenes'; they believe that Christ, the son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary, and they hold him to be the one who suffered under Pontius Pilate and ascended to heaven, and in whom we also believe. But while they pretend to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither."

Jerome viewed a distinction between Nazarenes and Ebionites, a different Jewish sect, but does not comment on whether Nazarene Jews considered themselves to be "Christian" or not or how they viewed themselves as fitting into the descriptions he uses. He clearly equates them with Filaster's Nazarei. His criticism of the Nazarenes is noticeably more direct and critical than that of Epiphanius.

The following creed is that of a church at Constantinople at the same period:

"I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads & sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and all other feasts of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspersions, purifications, sanctifications and propitiations and fasts, and new moons, and Sabbaths, and superstitions, and hymns and chants and observances and Synagogues, and the food and drink of the Hebrews; in one word, I renounce everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom and if afterwards I shall wish to deny and return to Jewish superstition, or shall be found eating with the Jews, or feasting with them, or secretly conversing and condemning the Christian religion instead of openly confuting them and condemning their vain faith, then let the trembling of Gehazi cleave to me, as well as the legal punishments to which I acknowledge myself liable. And may I be anathema in the world to come, and may my soul be set down with Satan and the devils."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_\(sect\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_(sect))