

The Vow
of the
Nazarite
OR,
The NAZARITE:
Ancient and Modern

By F. C. J.

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OR

THE NAZARITE: ANCIENT AND MODERN

I suppose that every lover of the Word of God has some special portion in which he takes peculiar delight. God—the living God—has actually spoken to his heart, quickened his spirit and refreshed his thirsty soul with a draught of water from a portion of Scripture that may at first sight have seemed as incapable of yielding anything of that kind as the sand of the desert. But there is One who “turneth dry ground into watersprings” (Ps. 107, 35) and it is He who makes the dry parts of His Word to yield the sweetest refreshment.

But when He does that, it becomes us not to hoard these precious things, but pass them on to others; and, receiving from them, in the spirit of meekness, what they too have similarly enjoyed, a holy commerce results and this binds the members of Christ together in mutual dependence; and all dependent on the Head. In this way I would pass on to my fellow-travelers a cup of cold water that has often refreshed my own spirit in my journey through this “dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

It is found in Numbers, chapter 6, verses 1 to 21, and I quote the first few words from the Revised Version:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall make a special* vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself unto the Lord: he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar

* The word rendered “special” is in Heb. “pele,” and in a parallel passage, Lev. 27:2, is translated “singular.” In Judges 13:18 it is “secret,” and in Isaiah 9:6, “wonderful.” The sense is clear, “peculiar,” “secret,” “wonderful” is this vow.

of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the grapevine, from the kernels even to the husk."

A strange vow indeed, and even apparently senseless, since it led people to refrain, not merely from "wine or strong drink"—that we might understand—but equally from a bunch of grapes or a dried raisin! Well, that at least raises this clear alternative; if there is nothing in such an absurdity but what appears on the surface, then the sooner the book in which it is found be consigned to its kindred darkness, the better: or beneath that surface, there are truths of such incalculable value as to evidence its true author to be—God! Let us see which is the more reasonable.

The word "Nazarite" itself means "one who is separated;" and the distinguishing mark of his separation, or Nazariteship, is a form of precisely the same word, a "nehzer" or "crown," as that word is constantly rendered in Scripture, and as it might be rendered in V. 7 "because the crown (consecration in A. V.) of his God is on his head." Nor must we lose sight of this meaning for it throws its light on another Scripture that, for the lack of it, has been greatly misunderstood. God, in those days of shadows, put a distinguishing dignity on the Nazarite, by crowning him—we are living in the days of the substance of those shadows, have we then no interest in discerning what the crown was and is? This we shall hope to do later.

But whilst the word Nazarite does not occur in the N. T. there is another word of frequent use there, having the same meaning, and yet having quite a different application. The word "Pharisee" is purely Hebrew, and also comes from a root meaning "to separate"*** but there is no "crown" on the Pharisee, on the contrary, he seems to be as strongly disapproved, as the Nazarite is accepted, for there is this difference in their separation:

***That root is Parash: meaning "to separate, to distinguish" whence a "Pharisee" i. e. "one who was separated, singular" (Gesenius).

the Nazarite separates himself "to the Lord," the Pharisee from his fellows. The Nazarite thinks nothing of himself, the Pharisee thinks everything of himself. The Lord crowns the one, the other crowns himself.

But the N. T. is not without its word that **does** correspond with the Nazarite—that correspondence is found in the word "**saint,**" which again means one "**separated,**" and on this one the same divine approval rests as on the Nazarite—and he, too, as we may see, has a "crown" of which that of the Nazarite was only the shadow.

But are we—poor, feeble, failing things as we are—**saints** at all? Can we, without presumption, assume a name which we ever connect with peculiar sanctity? Let us see.

When Paul, under divine inspiration, wrote to the Christians in Rome, he addressed them all as "beloved of God, called **saints**"*—they were all saints by the very fact of being Christian. They could not be Christian without being saints. But if today we were to receive a letter from Rome it would be worded quite differently, and not one of us would be termed saints. In Paul's letter to Rome Christians are exhorted to holy living, **because they are** saints, not to make them that. But Rome not only insists that it is holy living that makes saints, but it takes many years, and indeed, centuries, before they are sure that that living is sufficiently holy for a true "saint" to be produced. The "saint" must be dead a sufficient length of time for his falls, sins and inconsistencies to be forgotten; and so not till many generations have come and gone does Rome canonize, or permit these candidates to saintship to be so called.

How different the truth in the letter to Rome. In that, instead of centuries, a second suffices; and instead of holiness producing saintship, saintship produces the holiness. Just as abstaining from all of the vine tree did not **make** a Nazarite, but he abstained because he **was** a Nazarite. All this is quite sufficient to show us the very

*Not called to be saints, for they might fail, but saints by their very calling, the "to be" has been inserted.

close relationship there is between the Nazarite of the O. T. and the saint of the New. Can any be uninterested?

Turning back, then, to Numbers, we note that either "a man or a woman" was free to make this "wonderful" vow. Whatever its significance it was open to all then, and whatever it signified is equally open and free to all now. It was **open** to all, but there must not be the slightest element of pressure. There was not one letter of legal obligation for anyone to take that vow, nor was there a shade of condemnation against any who did not take it. Indeed its most essential element was the freedom with which it was taken. It was this that made it so strange, so wonderful that anyone should quite voluntarily put himself in a place that looked little less than senseless. Every one of its strange injunctions were evidently intended to awaken the question as to what could possibly have been the inducement for making that wonderful vow. For the Nazarite must be altogether different from other people. Other Israelites might drink wine or strong drink (Deut. 14:26) but not the Nazarite. Other Israelites might take pleasure in his vineyard but not the Nazarite. Those abstentions did not distinguish the Israelite from the heathen all around him, nor one Israelite from another, but they did distinguish the Nazarite from all others. He, and he only, abjures all that is of the Vine—what then is the significance of the "Vine?"

Let us listen to Jotham in Judges 9:7-15 as he shouts his parable from Gerizim: The trees desired to elect a king over them, and they offer the honor successively to the Olive, the Fig and the Vine, and each in declining it, tells of its own special line of service which it esteems far above the reigning that is offered. The Vine says: "Should I leave my wine which cheereth* God and man." So the Palmist: "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104, 15). These two Scriptures will be enough to assure us that the divinely intended purpose of the "Vine" was to produce that which should itself "cheer,"

*"Cheereth" that is causes "rejoicing" as in Ps. 19:8.

and symbolize the pleasures that may be either true or false—good or evil. When the Spirit of Christ in Ps. 16:11, using the same word, cries: "In thy presence is fullness of joy," and the corresponding word is used in Heb. 12:2, "Who for the joy set before Him," there can be no question as to the purity and blessedness of what is there called "joy," although it is the same word as both Jotham and the Palmist used. Wine, then in all these cases is a symbol of something that fills man's heart with joy. But there are deceitful pleasures as well as true ones, and in our Scripture those from which the Nazarite abstained would surely refer to the pleasures of earth rather than of heaven, of the world rather than of God.

But we note, with increasing interest, that there are seven different forms of the Vine's fruit from which the Nazarite abstains, and that number in itself suggests we have here a comprehensive and complete view of "pleasure" in seven different forms. But looking still closer we discern another discrimination; for, as is so frequently the case in Holy Writ that it becomes another evidence of its divine Authorship, there is a clear distinction between the first 4 and the next 3. Just as in the 7 letters to the Churches (in Rev. 2 and 3), a little careful observation will discern that the first 4 run to an end, and that the 5th, that to Sardis, begins a new series.

Still more plainly are the seven parables of Matt. 13 divided: the first 4 telling of the course of events of this dispensation from beginning to end, and being spoken to the multitude by the sea: the last 3 to the disciples in the house, and giving a divine view of the same events—here the break is unmistakable. Nor is the same division less clear here in these vine-products; the first 4 show an ever-increasing intensity in a disappointing experience* (as strong drink is stronger than wine), and the last 3 a con-

* "4 is the number that speaks of testing, as being the number of the four winds of heaven, the various and opposing influences of which earth is the scene. This brings in the thoughts of **experience**." (Num. Bib.). The very number '4' then would lead us to expect what is to be found in pleasure, experimentally.

stant diminution of refreshment, for a dried grape has not an equal power of refreshing as has "liquor of grapes."

We may further note, too, that the first 4 are clearly divided into 2 and 2: "wine and strong drink" being together, and "vinegar" characterizing and linking together the third and fourth, we may see the significance of this too later. Thus the **Word** of God is like the **Work** of God, the closer one examines both, the more does the perfection of each appeal to one; whilst in considering man's copy of it—the painting of a flower for instance—one has to maintain a certain distance to get any idea at all; the nearer one draws the more imperfections tell of the different workers.

Of what then does "Wine" speak? From the Scriptures that we have already quoted, and as beginning a constantly intensifying series, we feel confident in interpreting this first product of the Vine-tree as a symbol of those simple, harmless, sinless pleasures that are quite lawful; nay, more, not only permissible but good. There are such sinless pleasures and childhood and youth must be left free to enjoy them. Not for one moment should the child of Christian parents be forbidden such, or forced into a path for which he has as yet no internal attraction, but rather repulsion. How often do we hear Christian parents say, "I will allow my child to go nowhere that I do not go myself, or to do what I take no pleasure in myself," till too often the youth gets such an abhorrence of the extreme strictness which he assumes to be the only expression of Christianity that, like many a sad case of which we know, when the curb is withdrawn, he hastens to exercise the freedom for which he has long thirsted, and goes in the opposite direction—into the world entirely—to the sorrow of all. That is a forcing of Nazariteship. The Christian parent rejoices in his Nazariteship; the Christian child is not there yet, compulsion is the last thing to be used and he must be permitted what answers to the "wine."

This, however, needs some guard; for as there was ever

all through Scripture, strong insistence on moderation in the use of wine and strong drink, so must there be corresponding control and limitation in the use of what these symbolize. Even harmless and sinless pleasures become harmful and pernicious if they are permitted beyond that limit of moderation that tells of their being held in perfect control. In this the watchful love of the parent must aid the child.

But have Christian parents no positive means whereby they can influence their offspring for good? Most surely they have. If they themselves have learned that secret that led to Nazariteship, let them show their own perfect satisfaction so far above all that earth can give. Let them so learn the beauty and perfection of their Saviour-Lord that their dear children may say to themselves: "My parents have something of which I know nothing, O fain would I know the secret of their peace and joy, for it certainly is not in that in which my unsatisfying pleasure lies."

O Christian parents, beware lest your own unsatisfied heart, through lack of living communion with the living Lord, lead your children away from, rather than to, the path of Nazariteship. Your occupation with Christ will thus be a blessing to your children as well as to yourselves. You must win, not force to Nazariteship.

But after awhile, wine must give place to strong drink; that is the simple sinless pleasures begin to be insipid, and there is a growing longing for what is less wholesome and that gets a greater hold on the heart of the one who is walking that path—that is, "strong drink" takes the place of the wine. But not even yet is there anything positive evil. The Israelite was as free to partake of "strong drink" as he was of wine, for it is written that if he lived too far from the place of Jehovah's Name to carry his tithes there, he might "turn it into money, and bestow that money for whatsoever his soul lusteth after for oxen or for sheep, or for wine or for strong drink" (Deut. 14:22-26). But excess in either wine or strong drink was ever sternly and consistently condemned.

Strong drink, then, is a symbol of those pleasures that are more intoxicating. They tend to rob the votary of his poise, his power of discernment, and if continued, lead to the next step in the path of experience:

“Vinegar of wine and vinegar of strong drink.” The interpretation of these will rest on that new element that is here introduced: “vinegar,” and that, if I am not mistaken, will be found in the meaning of the word itself. It is precisely the same as “leaven.”* Is not that intensely significant? For leaven is the clearest symbol of what is essentially evil: it is “sin in the flesh” and that is the meaning of vinegar!

Here, then, we get the pleasure-lover’s progress: an element of real sin soon enters into his pleasures. “Wine” and “strong drink” failing to satisfy the jaded appetite, bring their own penalty even in their indulgence. As the “vinegar” is biting, sharp, sour, so, with conscience benumbed, that from which there would at first have been a shrinking with horror, is gone into boldly. The “Vinegar” tells of the “pleasures of sin,” and in its extreme form of “vinegar of strong drink,” the corrupt lusts of the flesh. So-called “pleasures” cease to be that—like “vinegar,” they bring no joyousness, no exhilaration, but only bite and destroy the very sense that they were meant to gratify, and which at first they did, at least in measure, gratify. Here then in these divine symbols is most needed practical guidance for Christian parents. As soon as there is an element of sin in the pleasure—as soon as that can be clearly shown to the youth, then parents have both the conscience and heart of their children as their allies, and not against them, in the firmest refusal of permission to indulge in anything of that kind.

Perhaps we might find an illustration of the “Wine” and “Vinegar” in literature. There is much that, whilst not distinctively Christian, is at least clean, beneficial, wholesome—it should not be forbidden. But today there

*Vinegar is in Heb. “chometz,” leaven “chahmetz” and both from **chahmatz** to be “sour, biting, sharp.” (Ges.)

is an increasing lot of pernicious trash that not only enervates the moral character of the reader, but destroys that reverential fear of God that lies at the base of all Christian character. The writers seek to pour into their readers' minds the fogs and mists of their own impurity or unbelief. Wherever that is the case, the parent need have no hesitation, as long as he has control, in showing his love for his child in inflexibly forbidding him to read such books, and to this refusal both conscience and heart will yield tacit, if not expressed assent, and eventually in later life, keen appreciation.

This "Vinegar of strong drink" represents the end of the path of the worldly pleasure-seeker's experience. When this has come then the evil days whereof Solomon speaks have also come, in which the deceived one cries of his former delights: "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecc. 12:1). Nor need one be very aged before reaching this stage, for one of our own poets wrote on his 36th birthday:

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone,
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone."*

Thus ends that path, experimentally, in a wail of disappointment. But now let us turn to the last three, in which we shall get, I believe, the light of God on those pleasures and what **He** declares them to be from their very beginning to their very end.

And here, consistently with the number "3," we cease to look upon the vine, or the pleasure of this world, from the standpoint of human experience "4," but listen whilst our God tells us what it is in a true light. At once we are struck with this contrast, whereas before there was an intensifying, there is now a constant diminution of power.

The first is "liquor of grapes," or, as we should term it, grape-juice. But this is not wine at all. No amount of argument will make the mere juice of the grape into

*Lord Byron.

wine, without fermentation. It is a pleasant and refreshing beverage, but it does not fill the place, in symbolism, of the wine. Nowhere in Scripture is it written that grape-juice "cheers God and man," or "rejoices man's heart," but gives the same kind of refreshment as does the simple element, water.

But see how that applies. The "Wine" now speaks of true, real joy—it has no longer a bad, but good significance, and God tells us in this symbolic way, that all the pleasures that this world away from Him can give have no real "wine"—no real joy in them at all. At best it is only "grape-juice." And most confidently do I appeal to each one of my readers. Have we not all found it to be true? Do we not remember the time when returning, perhaps, from some of this world's hilarity—the "wine" in its bad sense—we have said in our bitterness: "If this is the best that life can give, then I wish I had never been born?" How promising of pleasure the world is to the young, and generation after generation sip of the cup that that aged Deceiver puts to the lips, but there is no true joy in it, and the more ardently we pursue the sooner do we become, what has a special word attached to it, "**blasee**," and the grape-juice has to dwindle to merely a fresh, green or moist grape.

Surely that clearly speaks of diminished ability to quench thirst, and as a symbol of the diminishing power of this world's pleasure to refresh. Nor is that the end of the series. All moisture goes, till at last the votary of this world's pleasures is sucking a dried grape not only with no wine, but with no moisture at all.

The thirst is still there in the ever-thirsting heart, but there is no means of even temporary relief. Do we not get a sad picture of a man sucking a "dried grape" in that thirsting wealthy devotee of pleasure, who esteemed the abundance that his wealth gave him, to be his "good things" (Luke 16)? But what thirst can there be without any body—for the rich man was surely disembodied. All must be figurative, and if the fire in which

he was tormented was the realized wrath of God, would not the water that he desired be the opposite of this—that love for which all human spirits long, and lacking it, will thirst for to all eternity? God's love alone satisfies the spirit. His fine raiment might clothe his **body**—his sumptuous fare might satisfy his **soul**, but neither of these will quench the thirst of man's **spirit**, and to depart out of this life without finding that one single source of satisfaction means an everlasting sucking of a "dried grape."

Having thus considered these seven forms of the Vine-tree from which the Nazarite voluntarily abstained, can we not conceive how incomprehensible the type must have been in Israel and how incomprehensible the anti-type will be today? The substance will surely not be less so than the shadow. I throw myself back to Israel's day, and here is a young man, we will say, who has all his life taken pleasure from every form of the fruit of the vine, from wine to raisin, but now has voluntarily taken a vow, and in consequence turns away from all, nor can he be induced to touch the Vine-fruit in any form—what can have induced so unreasonable a vow? But he is not sad. Indeed he seems to have found some source of joy that makes him the happiest man in the place. No need for him to preach: his whole life is a testimony to some secret source of joy. O, to learn what that secret is!

Would that not have been the cry of many a heart? God wanted a man in those days who should foreshadow the power there is in Jesus, His beloved Son, to give a satisfaction that nothing in all this poor old world can give. Let one who has proved the vanity of this world's pleasures, find Jesus to be his Lord and his God—His Lover and his Saviour, then farewell, he cheerfully cries, to all that this world can give. No need for him to "speak to everyone he meets" with the lip; his calm joy, underlying, it may be, waves of natural sorrow, speak of Christ more forcibly than all the sermons that could be preached.

The Second Characteristic Mark

We have been looking at the strangest and most thorough of total abstainers, not merely from wine but even from grapes, now let us read together in verse 5 of Num. 6, the second mark, and it will awaken our interest and astonishment no less than the first: nay, it may produce perhaps more genuine awe, as bringing us still more directly into the Presence of God.

“All the days of his vow of separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, he shall let the locks of his hair grow long.”

Think of it! A Nazarite was not to permit his hair to be cut! Surely that is either an absurd puerility or a covering to profound and divine truth. We reject the former, adopt the latter, and so pass to its consideration with absolute assurance of its having a worthy interpretation whether we can discern it or not.

The key to its understanding lies, I believe, in the two words: “razor” and “locks.” The former comes from a root “to make naked” as in Is. 7:20:

“In the same day shall the Lord shave with a **razor** that is hired, namely by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head and hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.”

That is, Jehovah threatens to **expose** the shame of His people, by using the Assyrian as the “razor” who shall sweep away all their covering, and leave them naked and bare. The “razor” then becomes a clear symbol of what **uncovers** or **exposes**.

In exactly the same line, the word for “locks” also comes from a root “to make naked,” only in this word here, we must see what prevents the nakedness. The razor and the locks are in antithesis, the one exposing, the other preventing exposure; and both thus telling as clearly as possible that the Nazarite must not be **exposed**—he must be hidden.

Letting the light of the N. T. fall on our verse, we get a step further, for

“Doth not nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (1 Cor. 11:19).

By the vow of the Nazarite then, a man went voluntarily in a path quite contrary to that he would **naturally** have taken, even adopting what was a shame, for it expressed womanly weakness, submission and dependence. The teachings of nature then never led any one, at any time, to take the vow of a Nazarite!

In this light let us see this phase of the singular vow in that pattern Nazarite: Samson.

I am not unaware of, nor indeed without a large degree of sympathy for, the prejudice that many have against deductions from Hebrew names. Great caution is surely needed, but they have so often **startled** by the clear gospel truths that they enwrap, that it becomes nothing less than folly to ignore them. So in the case of Samson, his name itself seems to tell the very reason for his existence, for “Samson” means “sunlike.”* He shines indeed, but he is not the sun, it is as the moon shines, all the light of which is sunlight. Not one single ray of light comes directly from the moon itself, which is nothing but a desolate ruin. She is absolutely dependent on the sun for all her powers of shining. Thus she is a very effective Evangelist, for she ever preaches this gospel, that although the sun has left the earth, is invisible, and the earth consequently lies in darkness, yet it is still shining in heaven, for there, in the moon, is its light! Her gospel-preaching is silent, yet there is no speech nor language where that gospel is not to be heard, for it simply consists in reflecting the sun’s light—surely **that** needs no interpreting.

But what an excellent name then Samson was for a Nazarite, and for the antitype of the Nazarite today. Man

*A contraction from “Shemesh-ohn” which Ges. renders by “like the sun.” The affix **ohn** has too, at times, the idea of **diminution**, and thus might tell of a **palor** light than that of the sun; nor would this be very far from a **reflected** light.

is surely very like the moon in being a moral ruin, and quite incapable of giving out any heavenly light apart from dependence on his Sun, Christ: and every single ray of divine truth is only reflected light from Him, and is a witness to the darkened world that Jesus, although invisible, lives. That is the gospel according to the Nazarite, nor is any specific gift needed to preach **that** gospel.

What a living enigma that Samson must have been in his day, and for that matter is still, for all the pictures that are drawn of him present him as a giant with huge limbs, and such outstanding muscles as would have made it quite unnecessary for the Philistines to have given Delilah one cent to discover wherein his great strength lay—it would have been quite patent to everyone. But these pictures, false as they are, have at least this value: they show how incomprehensible the Nazarite will ever be to the world that must find a natural cause for everything, for it knows nothing of a living Lord Jesus.

But such a picture is quite false, for as we were assured that the Nazarite excited wonder and questions by being the most joyous man in the community, with no apparent source of pleasure; so was he the weakest in appearance, and the wonders of strength that he effected, without any visible strength at all that could account for them “wherein his great strength lay.”

But not only was his name significant, but so was his dwelling place.

“And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan (or Mahanehdan), between Zorah and Eshtaol” (Ju. 13:25).

Those strange Hebrew words may be perfectly meaningless to us, but would they have been so to a Hebrew? Take the names that we give to places to express their situation, as “Lakeland” and “Mountain-view,” these convey an intelligible meaning to us, but would they have the faintest significance to a Chinaman if not translated into their Chinese equivalents? Of course not. And so with these three **Mahanehdan, Zorah and Eshtaol**: let us ren-

der them into English and see if they are not replete with deepest spiritual significance.

"Mahanehdan" is a compound, the last part of which "Dan" is familiar to every Bible reader, and clearly speaks of judgment, for "God hath judged me," said Rachel, "therefore called she his name **Dan**" (Gen. 30:6). Look, too, at the play on the word in Gen. 49:16: "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes." "Dan" therefore tells of "judgment." The first part, "**Mahaneh,**" is from a root, "to set oneself down," "to pitch tents" (as Num. i, 52), hence "to encamp" and so the place is called "The Camp of Dan" (Judges 18:12). The basal idea being "to settle down" will give a much more spiritual significance than the camp of a few men; so that the whole word would mean to a Hebrew ear, "**where judgment settles down.**"

"Zorah" is the word applied to the stroke of leprosy, that clear type of SIN when exposed and brought to the surface. Indeed the cognate word, "Zara" is rendered "leprous" and "leper" as in Lev. 13:45: "He is a **leprous man.**" Thus Zorah united with Mahanehdan tell of the **Sin that brings down the judgment!**

But that still leaves "Eshtaol," again a compound word, made up of "Esh," indisputably meaning that symbol of divine wrath and judgment "**fire;**" whilst "taol" is from a root "to curse," and is thus itself a "**curse.**"

Can one think that all these consistently threatening names are thus mere coincidences, and are brought together without divine intent and significance? If so, some of us will certainly be compelled to differ from them when a free, but perfectly correct interpretation of the three names would be:

"Where judgment settles down (Mahanehdan)
upon Sin fully brought to light (Zorah) in wrath
and curse (Eshtaol).

Could any words speak clearer of that **Cross** of Christ where Judgment fell on Him who was there made Sin and a Curse for us?

But do you ask: What is the practical value of such interpretation? Then permit me to ask: Can you con-

ceive of a more fitting spot for the Spirit of God to move any one to Nazarite separation to their Saviour-Lord? It is here, at the Cross, that all true Nazarite testimony begins, and here it ends (see Ju. 16:31)—sorrowful beyond all words is it, that any should pass through this brief life without a visit to Mahanehdan, between Zorah and Eshtaol! Have you never been there, beloved?

But Samson occupies the center of the picture and as in the earlier case, God evidently wanted a man by whom he might shew us that there is a fund of joy in His Beloved Son to satisfy every heart of man, so here He has a man who by the very tokens of womanly weakness, will shew that there is strength enough in our Lord Jesus to suffice for every test of life. Surely Samson is worth a little meditation, and will it not be worth while to find who or what is primarily (for there may be more applications than one) the antitype of the Nazarite, Samson, today?

Let me ask then, has God a corporate witness upon earth—one that has taken in this respect the place of Israel? Surely he has you say, and that witness is today **the Church**, whose one calling—the very reason for her existence, as evidenced by her earliest confessors—is to testify that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead; and that testimony her apostles gave with much power (Acts 4, 33). Nor did that **power** consist simply in convincing argument, but by such mighty works as never could have been effected if the Lord Jesus had been still in the tomb. Look at her in her spring-time: in her bright fresh morning, in the gracious dew of her youth. Did she have one single element that is esteemed today the source of religious strength? Were her successful ministers men of learning, eloquence, cleverness, magnetic attraction, and all those **drawing** qualities that are looked upon as essential, and command compensation in proportion to their powers of attraction? Were the ‘pillars of the Church’ men of many dollars, and the more the dollars the stronger the pillars? Had **that** been the case, the source of her strength would have been as clear as in the steel

muscles of the athlete with which our Samson is so falsely pictured. The Lord Jesus might still be lying in Joseph's tomb, the Spirit of God need not have come, for those are just the natural qualities by which success in the world is attained. "Silver and gold have I none" said one of her mightiest, "I glory in my infirmities" said another.

No, no—her strength must have consisted in her felt weakness alone; for that is all she had: and this led her to dependence on her Lord. Her power lay in her poverty: and, without any adequate cause for all that she accomplished, people asked the same question as of Samson: "Wherein doth her great strength lay? What is her secret?" And she has no answer save that "**The Lord is risen.**"

But since we have now found the Nazarite of this dispensation in the Church of God, let us turn back to the type and note that covered head, bearing on it what is indeed in the way of nature a "shame" for a man, and yet is here called his "crown."* But precisely in that same way the long hair that is a shame for the man, is the very glory or crown of the woman; but does not that prove the correctness of our interpretation? that the antitype of Samson must be found—not in a man nor in any individual; but in that Church to which is ever given the place of the woman, as it is written: "for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," (2 Cor. 2:2) and again "wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord? For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" (Eph. 5:22-23): Thus

* The first occurrence of the word "nehzer," translated "consecration" in Num. 6, 7, will be found in Ex. 29, 6: "The crown of the anointing oil"; and so constantly throughout the O. T.; so that there is no question as to its being a correct rendering. Further, so surely was the hair esteemed to be a crown, that in Jer. 7, 20, the same word "nehzer," is even rendered by hair: "cut off thy hair (nehzer), which is equivalent to "take off thy crown."

the Church is in the place of a woman in her relation to Christ; and for the Church too her crown is what answers to the long hair: perfect submission of love, absolute dependence of faith. Now, our God, in His kindness, has given more than one prophetic picture of the path of the Church as His witness upon the earth; but none of these is clearer than in the seven letters as recorded in Rev. 2 and 3, for these give such unmistakable prophetic foresight, in their correspondence with the seven critical phases in the condition of the "Witness," that to deny it would seem to be due to the worst of blindness, that of the will.

Here we see in the first letter to Ephesus, the heart leaving its first love; of which there are many clear intimations in the N. T. as 2 Tim. 1:15 (Ephesus was in Asia), called back in the second by the persecution of the second to fourth centuries; this ended by an earth-dwelling Christianity in Pergamos—a settling down "where Satan's throne is;" which in the fourth place leads in the letter to Thyatira, to the dominance of the Roman-Catholic Jezebel, and the dark middle-ages that she governed. Out of this comes in the fifth letter a new beginning in a Re-formation in Sardis, as national Protestantism issued from the previous condition about the 16th century. Then in the sixth place, from those "dead" national churches, Philadelphia comes into being. In that Church we may possibly discern the time of gospel revival begun in the stirring days of Wesley, Whitefield, Fletcher, Beveridge, Venn, and a host of evangelists who itinerated all over the earth, proclaiming the free grace of God, and seeking to gather the "living" out from among the "dead," national churches of Sardis. It was characteristically the day of the evangelist. But this only came to a head about a hundred years ago, in the recovery of the simple truth that down to the very end, the NAME of JESUS, was God's only gathering Centre; not to be rivalled by any addition that should distinguish one believer in Him from another. Then, as growing out of this, that every evidenced member of His mystic Body, irrespective of intelligence or the lack of it, of strength or weakness: of

depth or shallowness of their piety—let there but be clear evidence of that common divine life that, coming from God, ever shows itself in holiness and love—these formed the circumference of the only Circle of Fellowship that could be found in the Scriptures, or that should be owned in practice. And although the grace of the gospel of Christ was proclaimed with a clearness hitherto unknown, yet the characteristic mark of this work of God was the recovery of a flood of light that had been lost since apostolic days. It was the blessed and beautiful work of God amid His people, and still it is refreshing even to look back on the early days of that divine movement, and some of us esteem it as no little privilege to have come into personal touch with some of those “chief men among the brethren”: true “chief men”—for they loved to be at the saints’ feet, rather than above them, and ever to take the lowly place of serving, rather than the lofty one of rule. They were covered, hidden, and in them the hair of the Nazarite was unshorn. Here then was Philadelphia (brotherly love) indeed; but alas, like the lovely flowers of earth, brief was that beauty, and hardly had it bloomed than the petals began to fall, and that “glory of the plant,” the flower of the grass—its crown, fell to the ground and was lost! “Brotherly-love did not continue,” (See Heb. 13:1) but with increase of knowledge, it waned. Surely it did, for a series of mysterious separations between the brethren presented the strangest phenomenon of the truest of Christians being in repeated heated and disgraceful conflicts with one another. These conflicts too raged all over the earth, wherever that dear Name that all of them loved, was revered! Was ever such a mystery? Philadelphia, as the last form of the Church’s testimony, lay in the dust, uncrowned! And lo! in that uncrowned Philadelphia we find Laodicea, a religious Democracy in the church as the name implies: in that last condition we ourselves are now living!

But had not God foreseen that danger? Had He allowed it to come without any warning? That would be impossible to believe. The Lord Jesus loves His Church too truly for that, and He wrote to that very Church in Philadelphia:

“Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” (Rev. 3-11).

How is it possible that we could misunderstand so clear a warning? Yet misunderstand it we all most surely have; and our most trusted Teachers, at whose feet we have justly esteemed it a valued privilege to sit, and whose very memory we hold in such affectionate reverence that we shrink even now from any difference from them, have all taken (as could be shown by any number of quotations) this “crown” to be given as a reward in the future, and assume that we are here warned, as in Col. 2, 18: “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” But there it is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is speaking of a “reward,” and therefore, necessarily, in the future; but here it is quite as clear that it is something that is possessed now, a present dignity, and not a future reward. The crown, or that which it stood for, is what they are to hold fast, and what they are in danger of losing. No one can “hold fast” that which he does not hold at all—that would surely seem to be beyond all controversy. I must have what I am to hold fast Nor is this any part of the promise of reward to the overcomer—that comes later, and is completely separated from this “crown.” We may then be absolutely assured that that Church in Philadelphia was crowned as her prototype Samson was crowned, and that the long locks that were his crown, had their antitype in the dependence that distinguished that beloved Church: it “kept His word”: governed every act of life by His expressed will: “denied not His Name,” for in that Name of Jesus, Saviour, they alone found any ability to walk that path. That simple submission of a heart won by His love, with its dependence of faith, ever was, and ever will be the “crown” of the Church, and of every component member of the Church. It is all the crown that we have here: a shame indeed in the eyes of the proud worldly profession of the day; but our true glory and crown.

But could there be any danger of losing such a crown as that? Who would even desire to rob of what is in man’s eyes a shame? Well, we may be sure that the Lord never

warns but that there is urgent need for that warning: yes, and even a prophecy of what is warned against becoming an actual fact. That "crown" has been lost as surely as Samson lost his, and by the same agency. The heathen will not take it—they neither know of nor care for it. Rome on the one hand, and "Modernism" on the other, are both too well satisfied to crave it, and will ever be as indifferent to it as was she who so well typifies Rome, the "harlot of Gaza" in Samson's day. We can conceive of none but a spiritually feeble emasculated Evangelicalism that is called Protestant and that has all the form of godliness, but lacks the power, and that therefore may well long to know that secret of power! Does that not appeal to you as reasonable?

For has this discovery been made to our praise, or our deep shame? If true, such discoveries ever lead to profound exercise and penitent self-judgment. Look at a time that very closely corresponds with the present—the days of Josiah, the last hope of Israel. There and then too, the Word of God was recovered. "I have found" says Hilkiah "the book of the law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 22, 8-13). Did that discovery cause jubilation? Oh how far from it: "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book," says the king. So, as to ourselves, is it a basis for boasting to find that our crown has been lost? Is it a sane ground for glorying that we hear our Lord saying to us, as the last phase of the Church's testimony, that far from being crowned, we are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17)? If we hear His Voice in that—and there is no promise to any that do not—will it result in boasting? Oh far from it: in nothing but profound shame and humbling at His blessed Feet.

I can but linger a little here, for who can tell the practical value of these truths, if indeed they be truths? HELPLESS DEPENDENCE ON THE LIVING LORD, BY WHICH WE ARE HIDDEN ALTOGETHER, IS OUR CROWN, AND WE HAVE LOST IT! Tell me, my brethren, has the Church as the one single witness for Christ, retained it? Does brotherly-love (Philadelphia) continue (Heb. 13:1)? Does it still characterize those who but a little while ago would permit nothing to sever them from

every brother in the redeemed family of God? Alas, do not shameful separations, rather than brotherly unitings, characterize even those in this, our own sad day?

At the risk of being prolix, let us consider again the correspondence of that revival of about a hundred years ago, with the Church of the early chapters of Acts. Mark the same lowly simplicity, the same lack of all human resources of strength as in the early chapters of Acts, characterized that divine movement that began on this side of the Atlantic, quite as soon as on the other.* The same Spirit wrought in every place, in the same way as at first. Not one single factor that was, and is still thought to be essential for success did that movement have. By ones and twos, here and there, people quietly withdrew from the regular "Denominations" with which they had been connected. They became aware that any division in the one Body of Christ was nothing less than a sin, as is so clearly and simply said in 1 Cor. 1:10-17: where the Spirit of God indignantly asks: "Is Christ divided?" Not however as condemning others, but as confessing their own part in that sin, did they leave every Denomination and sunk all their differences in the precious truth held in common by all, and all enwrapped in the one Name: JESUS.

Thus Cathedrals, Church-edifices, choirs, the distinction between clergy and laity—in a word all forms of modern religious attractions and dignities were left, for these did not accord with dependence on "His Word"—and dependence on those "denied His Name." But do mark it carefully, it was not the expulsive power of evil that drove them out, but the attractions of the Lord Jesus that drew them. Thus, in spirit, principle and practice, they separated from no fellow-believer. That would have made them an unscriptural entity, and as much a sect as those they abandoned. But in avowed communion with all evidenced believers, they gathered in out of the way places, at times with scarcely ordinary conveniences, in conscious and confessed weakness, finding all their resources alone in what is practically included in the Name, Jesus, the Lord; absolutely loathing any breach of fellowship with any to whom that Name was also dear. In this condition, one truth after another, that had long been lost, especially of a prophetic and dispensational character, was given

* We have seen copies of letters written from this side as early as 1809 that confirm what is written above.

to those little gatherings, who thus proved the faithfulness of His promise of being "with" such (Matt. 18, 20), and today those very truths have permeated everywhere that the gospel of Christ is known. But Christians have appropriated the truths but avoided the reproach of complete separation to our Saviour-Lord. Thus the secret of Nazarite separation by which they were obtained and alone maintained, has been practically lost—I do not say theoretically, or in word, but in power. Lost indeed, for the possession of these truths is made the very basis of a boast, as our Lord writes to us. We (not in lip, we know far too much for that, but in that deceitful heart that He alone knows, and to the speech of which He listens) say: "I am rich, and have become rich and have need of nothing." Oh my brethren, dare we say He does not speak truth? Can we refuse its application? Oh, the "crown" has as surely gone from us, as a Witness to the resurrection-power of our Lord, as it had from Samson in the day of Delilah of Sorek. No one now asks the secret of strength for there is no strength evidenced to suggest such a question!

Let us then, as owning ourselves in this sad case, and if grace permit, with somewhat of that "contrite spirit" that still draws His gracious "look" (Is. 66:2), enquire by what agency Samson lost his crown, and did he ever regain it? If so, may not we too have a hope of regaining our lost crown even yet, before the end?

Little had Samson to fear from open foes, it was the soft blandishments of fair Philistine women that were his undoing, and by one of these was he robbed of his crown. In the antitype of that woman may we find the agent who has taken away our crown.

We cannot trace his downward path in detail, for that space forbids, but we at least may note that he begins that path by leaving his own place and portion, going down to the vineyards of Timnath (a word that significantly means "portion") and there overcoming a lion, but being himself overcome by the woman to whom he tells the secret of his riddle of the eater yielding meat and the strong sweetness. But that woman cared nothing for his crown, and he retains it.

We, too, know of a Church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) that, as soon as the apostles were gone, whilst retaining its in-

herent vitality, yet left its true portion, its "first love"; and in this, at least, was in correspondence with Samson and that woman of Timnath.

Samson is next seen dwelling at Etam*—the place of wild-beasts, as that word means, and to this surely answers very closely the letter to the Church in Smyrna, where the "wild-beasts" have their antitype in the persecutions by the heathen Roman Emperors.** These are stopped by a professing Christian ascending the throne of the world, and from that moment the hope of the Lord's return is lost. The Church settles down where Satan's throne is (Rev. 2:13) in Pergamos.

But returning to the type, Samson, we soon see him attracted by one called "the harlot of Gaza:" Gaza (which means "stronghold"), was indeed the very stronghold of the Philistine, who was the natural foe of the Nazarite, for the Philistine, as closely symbolizes a dead dependence on dead forms, as the Nazarite does a living dependence on a living Lord. It is the basal principle of Romanism, that harlot-church, with its avowed guilty association with the "kings," or governments of the earth (Rev. 2:22:17-4). With her the Nazarite spirit was in illicit association till at midnight (Ju. 16:5), in the darkest hour of the dark middle-ages of her power, when Tetzels was openly selling his indulgences, that spirit awoke, in what is called the "Reformation," and then not all the gates and bars of Gaza could retain its reawakened energy. Samson was free—the Church had escaped from Rome. Towards Hebron Samson now takes his way, nor could a better word be found in all the Hebrew tongue as a correspondence with Philadelphia than that, for Hebron means "Fellowship," and is not that "Brotherly-love"? Samson is still crowned, for self-satisfied Romanism cares naught for that crown, any more than did that harlot of Gaza.

But now he falls under the fascinations of one who let us note is not called a harlot at all, but simply a "woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." What a contrast to the "harlot's" dwelling in barred Gaza, is

* "A place of ravenous creatures" from a root "to rush violently upon" (Ges.).

** The imperial world-powers are spoken of as "beasts" in prophetic scripture. Ex. Ses. Dan 7.

this "brook-filled valley of the choicest vine" (Sorek).^{*} Surely the whole scene is meant to speak to us of something that is really beautiful and good. Delilah is dwelling amid what tells of life (water) and brings true joy (the choicest vine); nor can I think of anything that will so well answer to that as does the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord; in a word the precious truths of the gospel: We must then find one who has this dwelling as the antitype of Delilah.

But on the other hand that name of Delilah seems to be in sharp contrast with the place of her dwelling, for it unmistakably means, "exhausted"—"languid."^{**} If there be then any significance in these names thus recorded (and who can doubt it who thinks twice?) they tell us, in an allegory, that whilst her dwelling was amid all that spoke of beauty and life amid the lowly (the watered valley); she herself lacked that life. Her **position** was lovely; her **condition** deplorable. Is it difficult to find an exact parallel to that? As Delilah followed the harlot of Gaza, so there followed the Jezebel-harlot of Rome, that condition of the Church in Sardis, which has now become so "exhausted," as to have but a "name to live," although its dwelling *too* is amid all the precious truths of the Gospel, which in its hands and on account of its condition are "ready to die." (Rev. 2:1-2). That is, the "Delilah" that has robbed the Nazarite of this day of his crown, can only be found in a powerless worldly Evangelicalism (Delilah of Sorek): precisely what the clearest word leads us to look for in the last difficult days—a "form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3, 5).

But I can easily understand one objecting: "Can the same type figure such apparent opposites as Romanism and evangelic Protestantism?" Most surely—a lifeless formalism—the very essence of the Philistine—can be Protestant quite as well as can Popery; and who of us does

* This is the most literal meaning of Sorek. The very word may be found in Is. 5:2: rendered "choicest vine," and again in Jer. 2:21: "noble vine." The word for "valley" might be rendered as in mar. "brook," and therefore speaks of a watered vale. Every word brings before us a scene of life and beauty.

**It may be found in Isaiah 38:12, where it is rendered "pining sickness."

not know (call it a mere coincidence, if you like, but it is an undeniable fact) that the most precious truths of divine revelation are today held by formal evangelicals, but without their power. 'Tis this that "Delilah" speaks of so perfectly by her name of "exhausted." Let us see if her relations with Samson do not confirm this.

Not at once does Samson lose his crown; and not in a moment was the Nazarite crown of Philadelphia taken away. Again and again Delilah has to plead for his secret. Again and again he tells her half-truths, that ever come nearer and nearer to the root of the matter.

First, he assures her that seven green or moist withes will be effective. "Seven" is here the distinctive word, but consider the two others; and again I would beseech my brethren not hastily to dismiss as "fanciful" what, because of its unfamiliarity, may appear so at first sight; but at least consider it, (2 Tim. 2:7). If what is deduced is contrary to plain scripture then it must be rejected at once, if in accord with Scripture, then surely it may be at least considered as to its being the very intent of the inspiring Spirit, bringing into life and purpose what otherwise is almost meaningless.

"Green withes" are, beyond all controversy, cuttings in which the vital sap still remains. These withes are still living, and must thus figure that which also has life in it, although as cut off from their parent stem—torn as we may say (with our minds on the antitype) from their place and context, may be, and are quite misapplied when seeking to bind a Nazarite. The word "withes" is not less significant for it has for its root meaning "what is left, or remains," as in Exodus 12:10; "that which **remaineth**"; again "there **remained** not any green thing" (Ex. 10, 15), and many other examples might be given, but these will suffice to show that there is no strain in "green withe," meaning something that **remains with life** still in it, but as being cut from the parent stem is both out of its place, and ready to die.

Now compare with these meanings, the counsel that the Lord addressed to the Church in Sardis: "**strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die**" (Rev. 3:1-2). The mere recurrence of the same word is of course in itself of no significance, but what were the things that still remained in Sardis, with life still in them, although

as separated from where they rightly belonged, were "ready to die"? Grant tentatively at least that Sardis speaks of a Protestantism where all are "Christians" by nationality—where, if you meet a man in the street and ask him if he be a Christian he feels insulted, and says "Do you take me for a heathen?" although he may know nothing by practical experience of penitence or forgiveness, and have no living faith—he at least, has but a name to live. Then the "withes," the "things that remained" must surely be those foundation truths from Holy Writ that still have life in them and are still remaining even in Sardis. But you say, "How can such divine truths be applied here as binding the Nazarite Spirit in the Church?" Are we quite ignorant of this, that texts from the very word of God, may be severed from their parent stem, or context and when so severed misused? Did not the Devil seek to use "green withes" when he said: "It is written" (Luke 4:10). Indeed the Scriptures have been and are often misapplied to bind the free action of the Holy Spirit in His people, and this is what answers to Delilah's vain attempt to bind Samson with green withes.*

Again Delilah pleads and again he answers that if she bind him with new ropes that have been made specifically for this purpose, as the withes had not, he will be found powerless. "New ropes" differ from withes, in that there is no life in them at all, they are of man's making. Well, Protestantism can make "new ropes" quite as easily as Rome. For instance the Pope may issue dogmas that no one has ever heard of, such as Papal "infallibility," and "the immaculate conception"; and you will look equally in vain in Holy Writ for the necessity of human ordination before one who has "received a gift" is to be permitted to "minister the same" (1 Peter 4:10): that is certainly a "new rope," as far as scripture is concerned, and it would hamper Nazarite energy. But all these "rules" are vain—the Nazarite breaks through all as if they were a thread.

Charging him with mocking her, still she seeks his secret, and now he comes much nearer, for he practically tells her that it lay in his long locks. "Weave them" he

* Possibly "green withes" may be discerned by some of my readers in the misapplication of such scriptures as 2 Tim. 2:21 and 2 John. Misapplications that have worked unspeakable shame and widespread sorrow.

says "with the web, and I shall be held captive." So, unwarned by all that has preceded, he permits her to interweave his Nazarite crown with her work! Is it not all too easy of interpretation? Many an individual has illustrated it. Have we never seen one unknown and unheralded, with no "Reverend" prefixes, no worshipful affixes to his name, no humanly accorded dignity, yet, wherever he goes, the Spirit of God acts mightily? But after awhile, the regular order of things, astonished at his unaccountable power, patronizes him, and seeks to make use of that spiritual power to further its work; that is his Nazarite locks are interwoven with the Philistine web. What is thus true of the individual is but an illustration of what has been true of that Testimony as a whole, that God raised up a century ago.

But how different the Nazarite's work is really to that of the Delilah of our day? She is deeply interested in this world's politics, he cares nothing about them save as being "subject to the powers that be." She emphasizes a citizenship on earth, he a citizenship in heaven. She aims to make people externally respectable, religious, moral and sober: he, to bring back in penitence wandering hearts to their true rest in God, through the sufferings of Christ. She pleads to "join the Church," he to put all confidence alone in the living Lord Jesus and His precious Blood. In a word she builds with "wood, hay, stubble," all of them useful things in their way, but very inflammable and temporary; he with "gold, silver, precious stones," figures of what is not at all inflammable, but eternal and divine.

But still Samson retains his crown. The warning cry only results in his taking away the "web" with him: he does not get quite free from that. In the eyes of powerless formal religion this "web" may be a dignity, * in the Eye of God it is a shame. But were his three answers put together might they not suggest that his secret lay in "seven" "untouched" "locks of hair?"

But still this fair woman—fair as "religion" is fair, far removed from foul depravity, vexes Samson to death till

* It is not happy work, nor is it necessary to specify these, and only as identifying ourselves with the failure is it even permissible to allude to them; instances of what I speak will doubtlessly occur to my readers.

at last, he tells her what she never would have discovered, that it was in his very weakness and dependence that his strength lay!

Then she began to afflict him indeed: in a strange way for she puts him to sleep, and well she knows by what arts to lull him to that fatal sleep. It must be "upon her knees" the place of most familiar affection (See Is. 66:12). There is no opposition now—no hostile criticism now—nothing but solicitude now—she can have no evil intent! See how she loves him! She engages in no controversy with him now! She cares only for his comfort! He may safely sleep! And sleep he does! And the Nazarite spirit of our own day has slept too? Alas, is it not true to life?

The spirit of the Nazarite sleeps—not in the arms of the heathen world: Samson would as soon have fallen asleep amid armed foes: not in the embrace of Rome, Samson would as soon have slept in the presence of the lion: but on the knees of a beautiful but lukewarm Evangelicalism. That Nazarite spirit could fall asleep nowhere else!

Having thus soothed to sleep, Delilah "calls for a man," and makes him shave off the seven locks of his head—he is no longer hidden but exposed. The "razor" has overcome the "locks." There is no longer visible confessed weakness: that is gone, and in its place, there is the same exposure as in other men. A desire for prominence, even in those who are pledged to Nazarite self-effacement and hiding. There is no longer any secret: people know him, understand him, can see through him now, for he is like every other man. There is nothing to distinguish him! His characteristic testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ is silenced; he is as any other!

She awakens him, and he, poor man, "wist not that the Lord had departed from him." No one in that condition ever does, and precisely the same words, the Lord Jesus writes to the Church in Laodicea—that is, to us let us repeat as a testimony upon the earth—"Thou knowest not" Is that only a coincidence? "Oh have we ears to hear?" Can all these coincidences be undesigned?

Shall we seek to escape from, or blunt the sword of the Spirit? Test it, and see if conscience itself will not confirm this interpretation and application of Samson and Delilah as being of divine intent. Shall we then accuse

each other or anyone else? How utterly incompatible with the truth that would be! We are all literally in "the same condemnation." As a Testimony—as a final Testimony—raised up by God, we have failed as utterly as that wretched, miserable poor, blind and naked Samson. The antitype is only too convincingly true to the type. THE LAST WITNESS TO GOD ON THIS EARTH DURING THIS DISPENSATION HAS LOST ITS CROWN! O' what becomes us, when we discern that, but to fall in line with the spirit of that man "greatly beloved" (Dan. 9): and, as he, identify ourselves with the common sin, confess it with contrition, and await any form of grace, mercy and peace that He, who changes not, may grant us.

But can there be any well-founded hope of anything of that kind? Surely there may, for mark the closing scenes in our type's history.

Samson is now "making sport" for the Philistines; and this very day, what at one time raised the jealousy and fear of formalism, is the object of its scornful ridicule. You and I may not hear it; but do you think that this is not what is said on all sides?

"They talked of unity; they condemned our sectarian divisions; and look at them! We at least have tolerably clearly marked lines of separation. There is no obscurity in discerning those who cleave to "Episcopacy," from those who stand with the "Presbytery." There is no line so fine that anyone of ordinary mental powers cannot discern it, between those who have divergent views on Baptism by water. But these——! The very truth that they stressed, that, as there could be but one Body for the one Head, Christ, so they condemned every division among Christians as sin—now, look at them!" /

And are not these all too true? O my beloved brethren, have we not made—are we not making—sport for the Philistine religious world about us? Does not "confusion of face" (Dan. 9), become us infinitely more than it did Daniel, and yet he confessed to it, shall we keep our head lifted up?

But let the Philistine be careful. They may make sport of the poor failed Testimony, but that failure does not affect the truth of God in the slightest, and it is dangerous work to make sport of that. For if you had looked carefully at Samson's head, you would have seen the "hair

beginning to grow again" (Ju. 16:22); and today, where Christ's blessed Voice is really heard—where the humbling truth that He so faithfully speaks to us (Rev. 3:15-17) is in heart accepted, there too, we may perhaps discern that the covering hair of the Nazarite is beginning to grow again. Once more the poor of the flock are being hidden. Once more they are beginning to refuse the barriers that exclude their brethren. Once more they are beginning to hunger for Christ and none other; and in this alone is there any hope. Never another revival like those of the days of Luther, Wesley, or Moody. No Scripture justifies such an expectation, but a personal individual hungering for our Lord Jesus, as the One "Faithful and true Witness" who has never failed—who can never fail, and that hunger He in His everlasting love, will meet by coming to sup with each one and each one with Him (Rev. 3:20). Do we not covet that?

Samson's day closes with dark clouds, but at the last, there is a rift in the clouds, a ray breaks through the gloom, as he passes off the scene, and in that very departure, he leaves behind him the proud temple of his Philistine foes an absolute ruin.

So in the hour of Christendom's loudest boastings over the amazing human achievements of the day: in the hour of its merriest "sport" at the sad condition of the little remnant of His people, a shout is heard, a trumpet sounds, and in the twinkling of an eye, the Nazarite-spirit in that remnant departs, leaving behind as complete a wreck as the temple of Dagon at the departure of Samson. It is in the Lord's words "spewed out of His mouth," and does not that mean a ruin? This may later become a Babylonian unity—great still in the eyes of the world, but ever a ruin in the Eye of God.

Is it not solemn? Is it not vital? Oh my beloved, let us see to it that with each of us individually "the hair of the head is growing again, and that we have neither hope nor boast save in our utter lack of all that forms the confidence of the formal profession of the day: and, whatever may be His will regarding us, we will rejoice at least that He—Jesus our Lord—remains, and is altogether sufficient "for us," and loves us still.

THE THIRD CHARACTERISTIC MARK

If we carry with us the truths that we have already learned from the Vine and the Hair, it will aid us in interpreting the third distinguishing mark of the Nazarite, and correctly to apply it to our own day; nor will it prove one whit less valuable than what has preceded in this strange, marvelous, peculiar, singular, wonderful secret vow!

And now we note that in the order in which these three marks are presented they cover the whole of man's life here. As the first speaks of those pleasures that are the peculiar attraction of **youth**. And the second of the strength required for the earnest battle of life of **middle-age**; so the third speaks of what the **aged** face: death. Can our Nazarite give us any light on that? Will it not be welcome if he can?

But did God create man with the primal intent that after a certain time of probation he was to die? Scripture does not permit such a thought. The cessation of Adam's life was dependent solely on his disobedience. Sin and sin only caused man's death. Human death then is only the evidence of human sin, and is so closely related to it as to be identified with it. As the effect can never be separated from its cause, so death as it affects men, tells of sin and thus equally defiles.

Now the Nazarite has already told us that there is in our Lord such a perennial spring of **joy**, as would make His people independent of all the pleasures that this world can give; and such grace and strength as would make them even glory in their infirmities; so he shall now tell us that there is a **LIFE** in Christ that death can never touch or affect in the slightest! O my brethren, if one may speak for others, how little we know of our riches in Christ that are rightly termed "unsearchable!"

I will quote verses 6 to 8 of the sixth chapter of Numbers:

"All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister when they die: because the consecration ("crown") of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord."

Let us again throw ourselves back to the camp of Israel; we find there a Nazarite who has been bereaved of his wife. We are amazed to see that he at once separates himself from the body—he will not touch it! No farewell kiss does he press upon the cold forehead, no gentle stroking of the hand that ever responded to his affectionate pressure—he will have nothing to do with it!

What a hard-hearted man, do you say? Well, if that were the explanation, there would be no secret at all, and it would be a very evil, and not a good characteristic. "Without natural affection" (2 Tim. 3) is one of the marks of the last evil days and never has God's approval, as has the Nazarite. No, no; as he is the happiest man without any apparent source of happiness; and the strongest, whilst apparently nothing but feebleness; so he is the most tender-hearted, for that only would awaken those questions that the vow was intended to do.

See him then, surrounded by his friends, wife and children: a true friend, a most affectionate husband and father—and yet, when that circle is invaded by death, he is not "touched" by the loss of his dearest! Should we not marvel? Should we not ask what was his secret, and what it all meant?

The Scripture itself gives us a suggestion of what that "touch" signifies. How affecting it is to hear the Lord say to Ezekiel, that sensitive prophet:

"Son of man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thy head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded" (Ezek. 24:16-18).

Note how well the Lord knows the strength of the affection that Ezekiel bears to his wife. He speaks of her—not by her name, nor calling her "wife" but as "the desire of thine eyes." If she were out of his sight, his eyes lacked the object of their longing. That surely does not speak of any hardness of heart. His married life had been an ever-increasing appreciation of the beloved companion that the Lord had given him; and now, like a lightning

flash from a clear sky, that very evening, with no long illness that prepares for the stroke, the "Desire of his eyes" is gone forever; for then, he tells us with eloquent simplicity "my wife died."

That night may have been given up to grief. In its dark hours, alone with God, his tears might flow, and the anguish of his heart be poured out into the Heart of Another who is never indifferent to the sorrows of His people, even when He Himself has brought them into those sorrows. But **"in the morning"** he does as he was commanded, and not a sign of sorrow does he permit himself. It was **this** that so awakend the astonishment of the people that they could but ask an explanation, as they were intended to do.

There is a divinely given ray of light on our Nazarite. As Ezekiel was to evidence no emotion, so the Nazarite was not to be **touch**ed by death. He was to shew that it had not affected him at all. Is not the secret of that vow worth following?

We know well that all these things were types; and types do not speak of precisely the same things, and yet may not the "man in Christ" give a corresponding testimony to what he has in Him in the case of bereavement by the same literal death.

For the same death certainly still-reigns over the bodies of us all. The Christian dies just as surely as the atheist, and feels the anguish of bereavement fully as much, to say the least. Is there then no correspondence between the Nazarite's superiority to bereavment and our calling now? If bereaved we are all subject to and permitted that night of weeping with Ezekiel, but after awhile, the "morning" breaks, and the Comforter, indwelling each, brings home to us with power the basis of all hope in the resurrection of Christ, and makes the comforts of the Scriptures to be realized, so that we feel—not merely **believe**, with that element of uncertainty, **that** word so often has in our suspicious hearts—but **know** with an assurance that is equal to actually seeing that those we have so dearly loved are "with Christ" and that this is literally "far better" for them, and when we are thus delivered from our self-pity and the dreadful sense of loneliness, by the Holy Comforter making our risen Lord a living reality to us, so that He fills the void that death

has made; then, in self-forgotten love we, too, can give literally the Nazarite's testimony as to the power of Christ's resurrection, and the sure and certain hope that gives. Not that we never weep again, but we grieve no more with death-filled bitter tears, but, even weeping, we rejoice in the bliss of those who have gone. This was how He comforted His disciples in view of His own departure: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go to my Father, for my Father is greater than I (John 14-28). It is the freedom from grief that evidences love, not its allowance! But this cannot be forced. Like everything connected with the Nazarite testimony it must be free and spontaneous, or it is the reverse of acceptable—it is loathsome. We have seen bereaved Christians evidently stifling their natural feelings from a sense of duty; and we have seen others divinely lifted up above those natural feelings, and there could be no difficulty in discerning the difference. We must be true at all costs.

Yes, since death, as applied to men, is identified with sin, and thus when it really touches us, separates us from the enjoyment of God's Face, let us thankfully note the provision that divine Love made for its cleansing in Num. 19.

That provision consisted in a spotless victim—a Red Heifer—being slain and then consumed entirely, with cedar-wood, scarlet and hyssop added to that burning. The ashes of that death—its memorials, we may say—were laid up for the purpose of restoration from the defiling touch of human death, whether a body, a bone or even a grave. But to be effective for that, the dry ashes would not avail; they must be put into a vessel with running or living water, and then, with a branch of the lowly hyssop the defiled one must be twice sprinkled with that water, filled as it was with the memorials of the death and judgment that have passed upon that spotless victim.

What a flood of divine light this gives! There is not a single feature that does not speak of our Lord Jesus. The female heifer speaks of his being "crucified through weakness" of which that sex speaks (1 Peter 3-7, 2 Cor. 13-4). The color "red" (Heb Adumah, a form of Adam) tells us of Him as made man (Adam). Its spotlessness witnesses that He "knew no sin," and its death and burning, of His being "made sin for us" (2Cor. v. 20). Whilst

the cedar-wood, scarlet and hyssop speak of the highest (cedar) to the lowest (hyssop) (see 1 Ki. 4. 33) with all the glory of the world (scarlet) that lies between, being put away in His Cross, where the fire of divine judgment consumes all.

It is in the Scriptures that we have the "ashes" the memorials of that death laid up, but they need the "living water" of the Holy Spirit to make them effectual for cleansing. Twice had this water of separation to be applied to free from the effect of a death-touch. First on the third day, that ever tells us of the perfection and acceptance of our holy Substitute, in His resurrection. Then on the seventh day again the defiled one must be sprinkled, telling, I believe, of the **internal** complete restoration, lifting up the soul to Christ risen and thus occupying with Him alone. The work **for** on the third; and the work **in** on the seventh day making **that** to have its effect in perfect restoration.

I have no doubt that all this is familiar to most of my readers, but these are the things of which the apostle spoke: "to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3-1), and what irresistible proofs do they give, of the divine authorship of the Scriptures!

But to return to our Nazarite, we have been looking upon him as affording light on exactly corresponding cases of literal death, but the main and primal purpose of the vow surely was that it might be a type of something else than literal separation of soul from body. In those days it was the external touch of death that defiled, what, in the light of the N. T. did that external touch typify?

We shall find the light that we need in Matt. 15,-11: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." This was absolutely opposed to all that those Jewish disciples had ever heard, and they ask an explanation which the Lord gives to them and to us: for "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" and sin in varying evil forms, and these are the things that "defile a man." Could words tell

more explicitly that the real source of all defilement is *within*, and not without? The true cause then of *external* death defiling was the *internal* death with which it accorded. If there had been no death within, the death without would never have defiled.

There was One, and only One, who had no death within; and nothing did any external touch affect Him. A little girl lies dying, and before He arrives her spirit takes its flight; who could touch that dead body without being rendered unclean? Jesus "takes her by the hand" and far from death affecting Him, a surging irresistible flood of Life from Him sweeps through the dead body and "her spirit returns again" (Luke 8, 49-56).

There is in Christ a Life that overcomes death altogether, and we—even we—poor sinners of the Gentiles, as we were by nature, (O that it may be mixed with faith in us who hear!) have in Christ that same life, nor can death ever "touch," or affect it, in time or eternity! It is that wonderful truth that the wonderful vow of the Nazarite must witness to us.

Again and again our God has illustrated this to us poor death-condemned sinners. We know not the sound of the Psalmist's harp, but we do know the sweet music of his joyful song, as we hear him in Ps. 114, with triumphant irony interrogating those two impassable barriers, Sea and River, that opposed Israel's entrance into their land, as their antitypes oppose ours. That Red Sea spoke of Judgment; and as a Conqueror pierces a hostile army, sending it in flight on both sides, to right and left, so did the sea flee. But its crystal walls, glittering in the dark night by the light that fell on them from the fiery cloud, must have greatly hastened the passage of the pilgrims: they will not trifle nor linger, but take the way of salvation without delay. But if quickly, still Israel passed quite safely, and the joyous Psalmist cries: "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?" But when they came to Jordan, that river of Death, it was not divided, as was the Sea, but was actually and entirely "driven back," nor did it stop in its retreat till it reached a city that

speaks, by its very name of man—the first man, “Adam,” which is beside Zarthan (meaning “Serpent-foe”); and as this must have been 20 to 30 miles to the north, no Israelite need have any fear of Jordan overwhelming him, for he could not even see it, much less taste it. Thus as Joshua (Chap. 3, Verses 16-17: “from the city Adam should be ‘at,’ or ‘by’ the city”) tells us all Israel passed over in perfect peace, in triumphant calm, with no haste due to fear, for Jordan’s bed, that ordinarily overflowed its banks at harvest time, was dry, and its waters invisible! Well might the Psalmist ask: “What ailed thee O Jordan that thou wast driven back?”

Have you not, down in the dark depths of your heart, sometimes, and in a small measure, sympathized with those Jews who when the Lord said: “If a man keep my saying he shall never see death” replied “Abraham is dead and the prophets, and Thou sayest ‘If a man keep my saying he shall never see death’ Art thou greater than Abraham Whom makest thou Thyself?” I say, have you never thought that to be reasonable? So we too may say: “The apostles are dead—the beloved John, the ardent Peter, the strong faithful Paul, and all the rest: apostles, prophets, and generation after generation of true saints who have indeed kept Thy saying, and even died for keeping it, O my Lord, I doubt not the truth of the word, I believe it blindly, but it seems to be refuted every hour, O what does that word, and its apparent refutation, make Thee?”

And the Lord in and by His word answers: “It makes Me to be the very ‘God of Jacob (Ps. 114, 7) figured by the Ark, before whom Jordan was driven back; and sheltered by whom, the feeblest Israelite never saw its waters. The Nazarite too by his vow told of one who had found a Life in Me that Death could never touch. John, Peter, Paul and the generations of saints and martyrs, although souls have indeed been severed from bodies, have yet: “never seen death,” and thy beloved whose loss thou hast mourned have still “never seen death:” for life with all its vicissitudes, and death with all its sorrows can never sever, or affect in the slightest degree that **LIFE which is in Me.**”

Is there not in these cold hearts of ours some feeble echo of the Psalmist's triumph-song? And as he cried: "What ailed thee O sea that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan that thou wast driven back?" So we, even if it be but a comparative whisper ask: "What ails thee O Judgment, that thou canst not overwhelm even a poor sinner like me? What ails thee O Death that thou canst not touch even me. "O Death where is thy sting? O Death where is thy victory?" Back with thee, O Death! back! nor pause in thy retreat till thou art where the proud sons of Adam, have made their dwelling even by the side of their serpent-foe, and there thou mayest prevent any from entering the fair fields of Paradise. But not one penitent believer in the Lord Jesus sheltered by that living Ark, shall ever see thy wave, far less be swept down to the Salt Sea of judgment by its onrush.

Thus as the Nazarite by his vow has served us in the **morning** of our lives, and again in life's **noontide** heat and toil; so now does he cheer us in its **evening**.

May we not well challenge ourselves and say: "O my soul, see to it lest this sweet and precious gospel thus announced to thee, does not profit, since not mixed with faith on thy part (Heb. 4-2)." O God, Who in thy love hast given it, so add Thy grace, that both writer and reader—every single one whose eye has passed over these lines—may grip and rejoice in its truth." Will none add: "Amen"?

Well might we leave our subject here, but we have not exhausted it, (can we ever exhaust the Word of God?) and there are a few points that I cannot bring myself to omit. For this we must follow the history of our human Nazarite a little further, and a very poor type would he be for and of us, were he **not human**, and subject to the same vicissitudes as ourselves in a world saturated with sin and death. Let us then recur to one of those vicissitudes told in verses 9 and 11 of Numbers 6:

"If anyone die very suddenly by him, he hath defiled the head of his consecration—he hath sinned by the dead."

and he must begin the carrying out of his vow all over

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again, "the days that were before shall be lost" or "fall";
that is, shall not be counted at all.

What discouragement to nature! What apparent injustice to carnal reason! How naturally human pride resents and protests against such a verdict! Who is not conscious of a something within him that cries: "Sinned by the dead! How in the world could he help one dying very suddenly by him? Was that his fault? Why should he be counted a sinner for what was entirely beyond his control?"

But such a protest would in itself answer its own question, and well does it illustrate how untrustworthy is human reason, when it leaves out of its reckoning all the Wisdom and the Love told out in the Cross of Christ. When, in a not dissimilar case, one is assumed to say: "Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" the Holy Spirit of God answers: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9:20). It is that very resentful proud nature that itself makes the touch of death to defile! Thy very **daring** thus to call God to account shows that thou dost not know Him. If thou hadst ever visited Gethsemane, and seen God putting a bitter cup of judgment, due to thee, into the hand of His Son, in Whom is all His delight, and that because of His love of thee—poor guilty sinner as thou art—if thou hadst ever

"On Calvary adoring stood
And gazed on that wondrous cross,"

and seen God, not sparing His own Son, in His love for thee, that sight would have so won thy heart, that thou wouldst go through life, with all its vicissitudes, and trust Him through thick and thin: justify Him in the darkest providences, for truest reason would say: "He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all" cannot possibly do aught but good to those whom He has thus loved. It is **reason**—the **purest reason**—that would say: Nothing can nullify the love shown in the gift of His Son: nothing can traverse the wisdom shown in the gospel.

Do you say then, if that be the case, sin may exist and evidence itself even **against** our will?

Surely it may. What Christian does not know that? What Christian does not know to his sorrow that there is a cistern of evil still within him that sends up thoughts that he hates, often leads him to speak words that he regrets the next instant, and even to do what causes him to mourn? Was it not just that, that made our apostle cry: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not—it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:15-17).

Do then let us keep in mind that true, real defilement comes from within; and that the touch of death externally, thus defiling, only witnesses to a death within that clasps hands, as it were, with that without; and as human death ever speaks of human sin, and as sin surely defiles, the word, "he hath sinned by the dead" is fully justified, for had there been no sin there would have been no defilement.

There are diurnal illustrations of this. Your child comes to the dinner table with an unclean face. He is quite unconscious of it. He is quite innocent of any evil intent; but for all that he is "unclean," or "defiled," and in that state can have "no part with" you, until he has availed of what your care has already provided for his cleansing. Should he deny the uncleanness, and refuse to wash, quite another element enters into the case, demanding quite different treatment. You do not hold him to be a naughty child because of his soiled face; but you do, if he rejects what you have provided for his cleansing. So when the touch of a dead world all about us, has affected our communion, if we refuse to avail of the provision divine love has made for our cleansing, we cease to be merely defiled, we become wicked.

For Scripture makes a very sharp distinction between these two, Defilement and Wickedness. Both do indeed speak of sin, but in the former, will is lacking, whilst in the latter it is evident. Who can measure the tears that have been shed, the spiritual suffering induced by the separations, and the consequent shame brought on the Name of the Lord Jesus, even by the failure to discriminate between these? The simply defiled one is never to

be put away from the company of the Lord's people, but they are to serve, by cleansing him from his defilement, as the Lord said: "If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

How clear too is this distinction between defilement and wickedness in the O. T. Does Jehovah ever give permission for any to be wicked? Does He ever say to any that he may rebel; or that he may blaspheme or steal, or murder? It is an absurdity. But He does very distinctly give permission for defilement, saying "for her, he may be defiled" (Lev. 21:1-3). Do you not see the difference?

There is no word, as far as I am aware, that forbids any Israelite who is one of the "common people" from being defiled by the touch of death, but every provision, that divine love, and wisdom united could devise, is made for his restoration, as we have seen in Numbers 19.

The priest might only be affected by the death of those very near to him, as in Lev. 21. But "the High-priest, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who was consecrated to put on the garments—must not defile himself for any, for the crown of the anointing oil of his God was upon him" (Read Lev. 21:10-12).

Thus evidently, the nearer one was to God, the more must he evidence the abhorrence that He has for death, and the victory over it that that nearness gave.

But, mark, the Nazarite is closer than the common people, or even the priest, and is precisely on the same level as the High-priest, and must evidence the same complete separation from death. And you and I, my beloved fellow-believer in our Lord, having the very same life as our Great High-priest, and being in Him by that life, are, by infinite grace, as near to God as is He, and are indeed taken into closest favour in the Beloved, and no real Death can ever touch us there!

Now, had we no life but that which is "in Christ," we should of course be absolutely free from the possibility of all defilement from the death that permeates the world on every side; but we have another life with its sin and

death-filled nature received from Adam, and this has communion with the defilement all about us. Every day in our journey, our feet become defiled. Suppose then that everyone with defiled, that is with soiled feet had to be "put away," **who would there be to do it?** Defilement is not a ground for discipline, but for mutual **ministry**.

Only One walked through this defiling scene without Himself being defiled, and on that Paschal night of John 13, no one presumed to wash His holy Feet, for, in the symbolic significance of that hour, **they** needed it not. He loving to the end, washed their feet, and so left us an example to wash one another's feet. If we bore that in mind, how compassionate and active in love it would make us in dealing with "defilement" in each other.

But in the second place, a more serious condition is evidenced in the words: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault*," what is the first thing to do? Put him away? Not at all, but "ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Thus let us lay it to heart, that if we see another "fall" into sin, the first thing is not to judge **him**, but each one to judge himself; for if we are not willing, longing, anxious to restore, we are not spiritual, but carnal, and thus ourselves are needing restoration.

Do you remember too that one medium alone might be used for sprinkling the water of separation on one who had been defiled by the touch of the dead? No branch of the proud and lofty cedar might be waved above him: nothing would avail but the lowliest of plants, even the "hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (See 1 Kings 4-33). And what an easily-forgotten truth that little shrub and its "springing out of the wall" tells. For a wall is what separates and so protects. If our confidence is

*"fault" Gr. *paraptoma*, a word covering so grave a fall as apostasy, as in Heb. 6:6, where it speaks of an irrecoverable "falling away," and although it must necessarily come short of that here, it shows how very serious may be the fall, without making the fallen one a wicked person, in the sense of 1 Cor. 5:13.

placed in any son of man feeble as ourselves, it is as if we relied on a "bowing wall and a tottering fence" (Ps. 62:). But Isaiah speaks of another Son of Man who is as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Is. 32:2) and who is not altogether unknown to us, and of Him he writes: "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (Is. 25:4). The "wall" has protected from the storm. Now consider, "springing out" of separation to, and dependence on Him, comes that lowly spirit that is typified by the hyssop, by which alone all the cleansing of old was effected, and it is in the "spirit of meekness" that is its antitype that any real ministry of cleansing and restoring can be effected today.

But there is a third character of evil, and one not merely different in degree, but in kind; for here the will is at work, as in the case of the wicked man in 1 Cor. 5, who was indeed "called a brother;" but, as living in wilful wickedness, he could not be vouched for as really a brother, for he was really a "wicked person" Vs. 13. Where that is clear, individual ministry ceases, and there is nothing but the Church, or Assembly itself, as gathered in absolute dependence to the Name of the Lord Jesus, to put away from among themselves that wicked person to that outside place where (solemn thought!) God judgeth (Vs. 13).

These three degrees of evil can be illustrated thus:

- 1: A walking through the mud, which we all have to do.
- 2: A falling into mud, to which we are all liable, if not watchful unto prayer.
- 3: A rolling in mud, which none of us should ever think of doing.

A true sheep may both walk and fall in mud, but only a pig rolls in it, and as far as that goes, evidences itself as being a pig, and not a sheep. Nor, as we have said, must we forget that we have both the old pig-nature derived from Adam, and the sheep-nature derived from Christ, and there is constant conflict between them:

"flesh lusting against the spirit, and spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17).

But let us remember too that there is a "mud" that is by no means confined to the foul depraved evils that naturally come to the mind in such a connection and from which all respectable people shrink. Was not the cloven hoof one of the marks of a clean animal (Lev. 11:7), yet does not the swine cleave the hoof as correctly as the cleanest of beasts? Look at those two brothers, both of whom have equally come to a "place of worship," which would you say was the "sheep" and which the "swine"? Cain is the latter. But what evil had he done, as far as Scripture tells us? It was not the murder of his brother, for it was his previous "evil deeds" that led him to do that; and the only deeds of which we are told are those he surely considered his "good deeds" (1 John 3:12).

In his case, his bloodless, Lamb-less religion was his "mud." So look at those two in the temple in the day of Luke 18, which would you say was the sheep in view of verse 14? Again it was the "good deeds" of the Pharisee that were his "mud." The Lord Jesus tells them that very unpalatable truth, and is it any wonder that they hate Him when He testified that their "good deeds," on which all their confidence was based, were their evil ones (John 7:7): the impenitent self-complacency of their religion was their "mud." So to this very day, in which our mighty foe is transforming himself into an angel of light, a Christless external morality is the popular "mud" in which the old Adam pig-nature loves to roll, and can do so without reproach for it has all the religious, but Christless world in its company. Of course this cannot be dealt with as clearly evidenced wickedness, but it is "mud" for all that.

Although much more remains, we must bid farewell to our Nazarite, and thank God for what we have learned from him. But little would that avail, were we not practically to follow in his steps. Shall we then take his vow, and literally abstain from all of the vine-tree? No, that would not fulfil it; nor would literally letting our hair grow long; nor never touching a corpse—nothing of that

day of shadows would fulfil the antitypes—the substance—now. But by finding in our risen Lord Jesus all we need for joy, strength, and life; for body, soul and spirit; for youth, middle-age, and our closing years, and the vast forever. If passing through a world of sin and death; if having a nature of sin and death within; if weakness and every form of need give a claim that He never refuses: then none can have a clearer call to Nazariteship than—shall I alone write my name here, or will not someone join me?—

F. C. Jennings.

THE NAZARITE

He drinks no wine! No vine of earth
 Can claim t'inspire his singing:
 Yet mark his constant holy mirth,
 As though his soul were winging
 Her homeward way, 'mid sunbeams bright,
 Instead of our sad downward fight—
 Through mirky clouds to endless night—
 What secret has this Nazarite?

His head unshorn;—his woman-hair
 Speaks weakness, shame, and hiding;
 Yet lion, as t'were kid, he'll tear,
 The strongest power deriding.
 A thousand foes he'll put to flight,
 With ass's jaw prevail in fight;
 Almighty strength! Resistless might!
 What secret has this Nazarite?

This old-creation scene, though fair,
 Is filled with dead and dying:
He seems to breathe another air,
 The power of death defying.
 The death within us doth unite
 Our souls to this pervading blight:
 His head still crowned—his garments white!
 What secret has this Nazarite?

The secret is it that you ask
 Of joy, strength, elevation?
 To answer is an easy task;
 One word gives explanation:
 Jesus alone, my soul's delight;
 Jesus alone, my strength, my might;
 Jesus, at new creation's height,
 Alone can keep the Nazarite.

I too was sad; or only forced,
 As crackling thorns, my laughter;
 When He (oh loveliest Vision!) crossed
 My path. Enough! Thereafter
 No wine could "move itself aright"
 To vie with Love whose depth and height
 And sweetness is my heart's delight—
 This secret has the Nazarite.

I was, and am indeed still, weak;
 But 'tis the same sweet story,
 That Love, whereof I love to speak,
 Hath made that shame my glory.
 My hair unshorn but hides from sight
 All that I was,—my wretched plight.
 Whilst now my Saviour's grace and might
 Suffice a helpless Nazarite.

Oh dream not that I've not been bound,
 Or count myself thy better:
 'Tis but that I at last have found
 One who has snapped my fetter.
 He wound His arms about me quite:
 Stood in my place, where God *must* smite:
 Thus died—then took to glory bright
 The heart of His poor Nazarite.

And when some death-defiling sin
 Comes suddenly across me,
 My course I must again begin;
 The days before are lost me.
 Dost think I am discouraged quite?
 Where can I turn? *His* love more **bright**,
 Like one clear star on stormy night,
 Guides ever *Home* His Nazarite!