

THE

CHRISTIAN NAZARITE.



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GOD has been teaching one great truth ever since the call of Abraham, that the only way of real blessing is separation from the world unto himself. This truth was taught in the calling of the people of Israel. Their peculiarity was, that they were separated from all other nations to be *God's nation*.—"Ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have *severed* you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Lev. xx. 26). Their laws and ordinances were to maintain them in that separation, but they speedily learnt the ways of the nations amongst whom they dwelt, and desired to be as them, and thus they lost their real distinguishing character before God.

In this nation which God had thus clearly separated unto Himself, there were many grades of nearness. It was a great privilege to belong to God's nation, but that was by no means the perfection of separation. There were Priests appointed by God, which were nearer to Himself than the Levites, and they again nearer to God than the people.

So amongst the laws which God gave to the nation, was one for the Nazarite—the man or woman who more particularly separated themselves unto the Lord.

God knew that the highest joy was to be found in Himself. The sin of man had been that he had "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever;" and God well knew that unless this principle was reversed, man could not be blessed, and that even Israel could not enjoy aright the blessings which he would give

them,—unless they learnt to value God Himself above the blessings which he gave. This was the lesson taught to the Nazarite under the law,—“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord. He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, nor vinegar of strong drink; neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernel even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head” (Numb. vi. 2—5). The provision was but temporary, and might often be repeated in a person’s life. It had nothing to do with purging the conscience, or purifying the heart. But yet in it God shewed the great truth, that the person separated unto Himself according to his own ordinance, had the strength of God. This was peculiarly shown in the case of Samson.—No razor was to come upon his head, because he was to be a Nazarite unto God from the womb (Judges xiii. 5). So long as this badge of separation remained, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he wrought wonders indeed. But when it was gone, he was weak as other men. The great principle was clearly set forth in Samson’s case, that separation unto God is strength.

In John the Baptist we see a new order of Nazarite. His birth was thus announced—“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb, and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”

To be filled with the Holy Ghost was no portion of the former order of Nazarites. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and enabled him to display wondrous strength; but John took his place apart from the order of Jerusalem, even in the wilderness, and preached *repentance* to all who came unto him. His Nazariteship was of a high, moral order. He had to say to the religious Pharisee, and infidel Sadducee, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come.” John stood and spoke as

the righteous reprovcr of all. And there was indeed wonderful power in the consciences of men in his separation unto God, and separation from men. They all esteemed John to be a prophet. Even Herod—whom he had reproved for adultery—“*feared* John, knowing that he was a *just* man, and an *holy*; and observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” A Pharisee who might have been strict to his vow of separation from every thing of wine and strong drink, from the husk even to the kernel, would have been addressed by this new Nazarite as one of a generation of vipers! As a mere human being, John was indeed a Nazarite of the highest order. This is the testimony of Jesus to him,—“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”

But there was to be a higher order of separation unto God even than John's! He was of the earth; but a heavenly order must be introduced. To this John himself bare testimony,—“He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.” John was not from above, as he says, “he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.” There was nothing heavenly in John's separation; although his ministry was of heavenly appointment. He was a man of the earth separated from things of the earth; and thus separated not only by the ancient ordinance, but by the direct power of the Holy Ghost leading him into strong protest against moral evil. He was separated from the things on earth to God. But John, in introducing Jesus, sets aside his own order of Nazariteship.—“He that cometh from heaven is above all.”

Thus we have the new order of Nazariteship beginning from above, from heaven, and because heavenly leading unto separation from earthly things. As in every thing else so in this, God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways higher than our ways. The old order was, separation from things on earth to God—the new order is, the being separated unto God, leading into practical separation from things around us. Separate yourselves, said the old order, from wine and strong drink, and other things, and ye shall be holy. Ye are holy, says the new order, walk as becometh those who are so.

Let us now look at the Nazarite of the new order. How different from John the Baptist! No injunction is laid on him as to abstinence from outward things as in the case of John. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Behold one not born of woman in the same manner as John was; but the great wonder of one intrinsically holy, his human nature conceived by the Holy Ghost. Hence it was by the power of inward holiness that he was kept from every thing defiling here; and by the same power he was able to use every creature to God's glory. His order of Nazariteship was to be in the world and yet not of the world, and to shew that nothing which touched him would defile his Nazarite separation. Hence we find the marked contrast between John and Jesus. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil; the Son of man came eating and drinking, they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." John preserved himself by *abstinence*—Jesus, in the freedom of life, and the holiness of Divine life, used what John abstained from. Men could appreciate, in measure, John's Nazarite austerity, although in their judgment he might have carried it too far; but they could not appreciate the intrinsic holiness of Jesus, or the divine loveliness of His way. The Holy Ghost, could find his resting place on him, as the Holy one—and devils even bore testimony to him as the Holy one of God—but man could discern no beauty in Him—although he could challenge them thus—"Which of you convinceth me of sin." He was the one in whom alone God was well-pleased, and yet his path was amidst the busy haunts of men. He refrained not from social intercourse with them, and He eat and drank such things as were put before him. He seemed purposely to put away from him the outward ceremonial of separation, to shew that he was the intrinsically separated one unto God, and that he could therefore use the creatures of God. "A certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat, and when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed his hands before dinner, and the Lord said unto him, now do ye Pharisees make clean

the outside of the cup and platter; but the inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also!" He purposely crossed those usages of men by which they supposed they were commended of God. And as he did, so he taught, "Not that which entereth into a man, defileth a man, but that which cometh out of a man, that defileth a man, for from within out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c.—all these things defile a man, but to *eat with unwashen hands* defileth not a man. Thus he who was Himself a Nazarite unto God within, shewed that holiness to God must begin from within. "But rather give alms of such things as ye have and behold *all things* are clean unto you." It is thus we find Jesus maintaining his Nazariteship or separation unto God, not by the ancient ordinances of abstinence from the use of the creatures of God, but pure in heart himself using with thanksgiving that which was set before him. In Jesus we see the energy of the new life acting amidst the old things. To the eye of man, he appeared not so separate as John the Baptist; but to the eye of God he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Such was Jesus, the true Nazarite.

But there was an hour, when even this blessed Nazarite became defiled. He had, though sinless, to do with sin—the sin of others, as their substitute before God. Then did Jesus become as the Nazarite, whose contact with death defiled the head of his consecration (Numb. vi. 9): what a solemn hour was that, when He in whom alone God had declared Himself well-pleased, was constrained to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What must be that love which could lead this pure and spotless Nazarite to take upon Himself our loathsome load of guilt!

But, let us ask, what was it that, thus imputed unto Christ, defiled the head of His consecration—separating even Him, as an unclean thing, from God? It was sin;—that evil thing which is the governing principle of the flesh. It was the judgment due to the flesh and its works which Christ, the sinless one, then bore. God was expressing His estimate of the flesh, when he poured out His wrath on our spotless substitute. Can any thing, therefore, declare more plainly than this, the worthlessness of any Nazarite-

ship which consists only in the restraint or cultivation of the flesh? Regulate sinful human nature as you will, it is sinful human nature still—it is, after your most successful processes, precisely what God condemned, root and branch, when Jesus bore His wrath on Calvary. A fair shew in the flesh is a thing easily attainable—fear, pride, self-love, a thousand motives, prompt men to seek it: but what is the testimony given by the cross as to God's estimate of it? Is it conceivable that that can be made meet for God, or acceptable to Him, the very imputation of which to His own spotless Son, cast Him from God's presence as an unclean thing? Is it possible that that can be real Nazariteship, which, once reckoned as His, so defiled the only true Nazarite?

If we say the flesh can profit and go back to former orders of Nazariteship, we are indeed ignorant of the great moral lesson of the cross. The one who is brought there by the holy Spirit, sees the flesh there judged by God, and is led to say, "Our old man has been crucified with Him." Such an one learns the humbling truth, that the flesh, whether in himself or in others, cannot please God. Any attempt, therefore, to make a fair shew in the flesh, vitiates the doctrine of the Cross. If man can be so far morally improved as to fit him for God, then has Christ died in vain: And surely this is one of Satan's great efforts,—even to discredit the grace of God, and nullify the work of Christ, under the specious mask of seeking the improvement of man, and the good order of society. And where is the offence of the cross if the flesh profiteth anything? The offence of the cross is precisely this—it publishes the flesh to be good for nothing. Does not this offend the loftiness and self-esteem inherent in the flesh—rendering the faithful preaching of the cross at all times an offence and foolishness to man? And I fear it will be found that this is at the bottom of much, very much, of present corporate effort after morality. In many cases perhaps the undetected wish to evade the humbling testimony of the cross of Jesus. It is easier to assign any reason as the ground of our course of action rather than that of obedience to Christ. To say I must walk as a Christian, condemns others in their own

consciences ; to say that I walk according to *the laws of a society* to which I belong, has no such power. The only society God now owns is the Church—and therein the flesh, its wisdom, or energy, or service—has no place.

But let us look again at Jesus, the true Nazarite. On the third day He rose from out of the dead—and He rose according to the spirit of holiness. Thus He again appeared in His own intrinsic purity—a Nazarite on the eighth day, the day of resurrection. His contact with death and its defilement was past for ever, and He arose the Head and pattern of God's new order of Nazarites. In this character He ascended into heaven, consecrating Himself to God. Thus He sanctified Himself—returning into the presence of God in the title of the redemption He had Himself accomplished ; proof indeed not only of His own intrinsic and unsullied purity, but of the completeness of that work by which He purged our sins. Jesus risen and made higher than the heavens, is, therefore, the witness and pattern of God's order of Nazariteship. And hence union to Jesus risen, which is by faith in Him as the Lamb slain, is the only separation unto Himself now proposed by God to men. Men are erecting their standards, and gathering around them in separation from the common mass of mankind, but God has set Jesus at His own right hand, and gathers only to him. And all the instructions given to the disciples of Christ, whether by Himself when on earth, or by the Holy Ghost sent down since His ascension to glory, accord with this. He laid his disciples under no injunction of abstaining from meats. Their Nazariteship was to be of a far higher order than that which consisted of meats and drinks ; and, therefore, in sending them forth he says, "eating and drinking such things as they give."

The first great lesson which the Lord Jesus taught to an instructed Jew was this—Except a man be born again (or from above, heaven-born) he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now every human thought of separation stops short of this. Man thinks of bettering the flesh, but God says, Ye must be born again. Both Jew and Gentile could understand separation by ordinances—touch not, taste not, handle not, were familiar to a Jew under the

law, or to a Gentile in his school of philosophy. Such things regulate caste among Hindoos, and form societies among Europeans. But Christianity is distinct from all this—it is from above. Christianity is, therefore, essentially different from mere morality, however rigid. And yet Christianity is the conservator of all that is lovely and of good report. For Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it,—telling it out, in its largeness as conceived in God's mind, and not in its narrowness as man had conceived of it, from its prohibitions. But Christianity essentially differs from morality nevertheless—for morality amounts to nothing more than certain restrictions laid upon man, and certain duties to be performed by him, while Christianity is the introduction of an entirely new power, *life from above*. Christianity, therefore, begins with life. It treats man as needing not amendment, but regeneration. Consequently the precepts of Christianity are addressed only to quickened persons—"you hath He quickened;" to those who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus;" to those who have received "an unction from the holy One," and who are consequently able to judge, not of mere human inconsistencies only, but of the inconsistency of acting as a man when brought into union with the Son of God, and called to walk in His footsteps. If these things are seen, how easy is it to determine who is a true Nazarite. Not the man who thinks to separate himself to God by refraining from many things, both lawful and wise for him to use, but the man whom God hath separated to Himself by His own Almighty power, making him alive, when dead in trespasses and sins.

Behold, then, the real Nazarite, in Jesus, at the right hand of God! Remember it is union with Christ there, even while we are on earth, that alone puts us in the true Nazarite order. It is by the resurrection and the power of it, that we enter on our Nazariteship. The cross teaches us the judgment of the flesh. In the resurrection we find a new life. The display of this life will be at once the evidence and the practice of our Nazariteship—the display, that is, of the characteristics of the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created

him. And this new man is indeed widely different to any fair form which the flesh can assume. So contrasted indeed are they that the truest loveliness of the new man will be despicable in the eyes of the flesh, and the things which men most highly esteem, yea, which are their very life's end, such as the knowledge, wisdom, riches, honours, of this world, will be as dung and dross to the new. The true Nazarite has *no* confidence in the flesh, and hence will be separate as much from mere intellectual refinement, as from degrading lusts. In a word, he will know no ground of glorying but Christ, and own no power for wisdom or holiness but the Spirit of God.

There are those who have named the name of Christ, who have gloried in their shame, minding earthly things, and making a god of their belly. But the glorying of the rich man in his riches, the wise man in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his strength, is quite as opposite to the genius of the new order of Nazariteship, as for a man to boast in his debauchery or his lusts. It is God's determinate counsel—who shall infringe it? that “no *flesh* shall *glory* in his presence—but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Whatever tends to exalt man in his own estimation, as if he were thereby fitter for God, puts him morally at a farther distance from God. The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and would not enter into the kingdom of God, or suffer others to enter in. The publicans and harlots went, before them, into the kingdom of God. Surely neither extortioners or harlots, *as such*, shall inherit the kingdom of God. But *of such* there had been those who had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, and they were heirs of the kingdom. It is not a question about immorality excluding from the kingdom of God, but of morality commending us to God as subjects for his grace. No question is raised as to the propriety of using moral restraints, or of exercising self-controul—these are bounden duties; but this is not the Nazarite character. That is something far higher, even the exercise of divine power in all things pertaining to life and godliness, a power above nature is thereby brought in, to keep it under, instead

of seeking by its own workings to make nature commend itself. The wisdom of God is at stake. Man says that his own efforts and resolution are capable of producing a moral regeneration. God says, that which is born of the flesh *is flesh*, and under any improvement can only be a corrupt thing.—They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But God quickens a soul;—that person is thus born of God, has really a new nature imparted to him, and has thus the power for true practical Nazariteship. This new nature can alone be strengthened with what is congenial to it—with bread from heaven. If after this, any who have begun in the Spirit, seek to be made perfect in the flesh, surely we must expect that if the restraint which the flesh has thus put on itself is once broken through, their moral condition will be below that of any. Such must be our warranted expectation of those Christians who think themselves more secure by *the pledge* they have given of abstinence, than by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit.

May the Lord give his children grace, as the real order of Nazarites, to walk worthy of their high-calling even now, and in a little while they shall be manifested in this their high character in glory with their risen Lord; not only separated unto God in Christ, but in the new Creation, into which defilement cannot enter.

Price 1d.