

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

---

## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE second number of the *Journal of Theological Studies* contains an article by Mr. G. Buchanan Gray of Mansfield College on the Nazirite. There is scarcely a biblical subject more difficult to write upon. Mr. Gray is not confident that he has new light to throw upon it. He is not satisfied with current theories, which are usually as accurate as their spelling of the name. But he has no new theory to offer. He has only suggestions. His discussion is intended to be 'purely tentative.'

One thing is certain. There are two kinds of Nazirites—the permanent and the temporary. A man might be a Nazirite for a limited period, generally for thirty days, or he might be a Nazirite for life. Were both kinds of Nazirites to be found all through the history of Israel? That is not so certain. Let the history of Israel be divided into two parts by the Exile. Mr. Gray believes that there is no direct evidence for temporary Nazirites before the Exile, and no direct evidence for permanent Nazirites after it.

First, before the Exile. Samson was a Nazirite, and he was a Nazirite for life. Mr. Gray believes that Samuel was a Nazirite, for he had the significant note of the Nazirite—unshorn hair, and Samuel's hair was unshorn during life. Nazirites

are mentioned also in Amos 2<sup>11ff.</sup>: 'I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. . . . But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink: and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.' The Nazirite is parallel to the prophet. If the prophetic office was not temporary, and it was not, neither can the calling of the Nazirite be assumed to be temporary.

But where is Nu 6? That passage gives the law for the Nazirite, and it is for the Nazirite who is under a *temporary* vow. Nu 6 is *post-exilic*. It belongs to the Priestly Code. The date of its literary origin, says Mr. Gray, 'falls somewhere about or after 500 B.C.'

Besides Nu 6 there are several post-exilic references to the Nazirites, and they all refer to temporary vows. There are the Nazirites of 1 Mac 3<sup>49ff.</sup>, of whom it is said that they 'had accomplished their days.' There are the Nazirites referred to by Josephus in *Antiq.* xix. 6. 1, and again in *Wars* II. xv. i. (where also the reference is 'almost certainly to Nazirites'), and they are all temporary Nazirites. The four men for whom St. Paul was at charges that they might shave their heads (Ac 21<sup>23ff.</sup>), 'seem to have been Nazirites.' Their vow was plainly temporary. Finally, the tract of the Mishna which deals with Nazirites

and is called *Nazir*, speaks of temporary Nazirites as common in later Jewish history, and speaks of no other.

But what of John the Baptist and James the brother of our Lord? Mr. Gray does not forget them. He does not believe that either was a Nazirite. For he does not find that the characteristic mark of the Nazirite—the long hair—is named as belonging to either. He believes that they were permanent *ascetics*, and the ascetic and the Nazirite had no necessary connexion, as the case of Samson shows.

What then was it that made a man a Nazirite? Was it avoidance of pollution by a dead body? The law in Nu 6 demands such avoidance. But contact with a dead body might pollute any one under consecration. And if a Nazirite was polluted by contact with a dead body, he could recover his consecration by performing the necessary sacrifices. Moreover, the law was for the temporary Nazirite. Samson did not avoid pollution by the dead (Jg 15<sup>8, 16</sup>). Samuel must have suffered pollution when he 'hewed Agag in pieces' (1 S 15<sup>83</sup>). It was not avoidance of pollution by the dead that made a man a Nazirite.

Was it abstinence from wine? In the Law of the Nazirite in Numbers it is ordered (Nu 6<sup>4</sup>), 'All the days of his separation shall he eat no thing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.' That is emphatic and comprehensive enough. It refers to the temporary Nazirite. Did it hold of the permanent Nazirite also? Take Samson first. There is no evidence for or against. And all that Mr. Gray can say is, 'It is difficult to think of Samson sitting as a teetotaler at the feasts or drinking-bouts that he gave.' Take Samuel. The Septuagint in recording Hannah's vow adds, 'And he shall not drink wine or strong drink.' But that is not in the Hebrew, and Driver thinks it has been added by a later hand. Again there is no certain evidence either way. But again Mr. Gray says,

'Samuel used to be present on festal occasions when it can scarcely be doubted that wine was drunk (1 S 9<sup>11ff.</sup>, 11<sup>14ff.</sup>, 16<sup>2ff.</sup>), and we are never told that he himself abstained.' Take the Nazirites of Amos' day. It is possible to explain that passage away also. Mr. Gray does not do so. He says that in the light of that passage 'it may be considered likely that abstinence goes back as far as the eighth century B.C.' Still he believes that it was not abstinence from wine that made a man a Nazirite.

Was it the offering of special offerings? Mr. Gray does not believe that the permanent Nazirite offered offerings at all.

One thing remains. Was it the unshorn hair? Mr. Gray does not believe that the unshorn hair made a man a Nazirite, but he believes that it was the one inseparable characteristic of the Nazirite. He believes that what made a man a Nazirite at first was simply devotion to Jehovah. The word Nazirite means a *devotee*. In the earliest times a prophet or a priest might be called a Nazirite. But with this was early associated unshorn hair. As early as the tenth century the Nazirite denoted a person devoted to Jehovah and outwardly distinguished by his unshorn locks.

It was the recognition of a primitive and widespread doctrine. The hair is part of a man's personality. If a man's personality is to be preserved intact, his strength undiminished, his hair is never shorn. If it is shorn, care must be taken that it does not fall into an enemy's hand, lest he gain power over the man. Its most suitable destination is to be offered in sacrifice to God; and it is an acceptable sacrifice, for it is, as it were, the man's personality, it is the offering of himself. So it was natural that it should become associated with devotion to Jehovah. The temporary Nazirite offered his hair in sacrifice; the permanent Nazirite preserved it and his strength in the service of God throughout his life.

The unshorn hair was attached to the Nazirite vow at least as early as the tenth century. Abstinence from wine came later. It is as early apparently as the eighth. It was probably a fusion of two heterogeneous customs. Wine was forbidden to a devotee (such as a priest, Ezk 44<sup>21</sup>, Lv 10<sup>9</sup>), because it was an intoxicant and made him unfit for his service, and then 'strong drink' was added to the prohibition. But this does not explain abstinence from everything that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. That was due to nomadic protest against modern luxury. The vine was unknown to the nomads, whose way was through that great and terrible wilderness. But Canaan was a land of vines. The vine was associated with luxury and ease. So the Rechabites, who were taught to maintain the ancient mode of life in all its simplicity and severity, abstained from the produce of the vine entirely. And this at so early a date as the eighth century became a distinguishing mark of the Nazirites also. They were devotees, and must not get drunk; they were also protestants against the culture and the native life of Canaan.

The *Guardian* for 31st January contains a paper by the headmaster of Marlborough College on the 'Teaching of the Old Testament in Schools.' It reveals a difficulty which others feel who have to teach the Old Testament in churches. Suppose we know something, however little, of what recent research has accomplished on the Old Testament, ought we to ignore it in our teaching? Some of us do ignore it. We teach the Old Testament as if all the instruments of knowledge had not been invented or had not reached the Old Testament yet. Is this wise? Is it wise to ignore what physical science has done for the understanding of the Old Testament? The science of geology has pushed the age of the earth back beyond the utmost dream of our forefathers; the science of astronomy has revealed a history of creation which must be laid alongside the history of creation in Genesis; the science of

evolution has its doctrine of the creation of man and has touched the doctrine of sin. Is it wise to ignore all that?

Is it wise to ignore what archæology has done? It has taught us that our old doctrine of 'special revelation' is a mistake. The method of creation was not a 'special revelation' to Moses, for the same method of creation was known to other men and other nations centuries before Moses lived. Is it wise to ignore that?

Is it wise to ignore what literary and historical criticism has done? It has taught us that God is not dependent on particular instruments. Moses was not needed to receive and deliver the whole Pentateuch. It has taught us, also, that when God uses instruments He uses instruments that are fit. The revelation in the Old Testament is a prophetic revelation. It was through the mouth of the prophet that the message came, having first touched the prophet's heart. Holy were the men of old who spake unto the fathers. Is it wise to ignore that?

Is it wise to ignore all that has been done in translation? There is an offensive manner of introducing a better translation. There are teachers and there are preachers who 'prefer the rendering of the Revised Version here' in a tone that tends to destroy our belief in the Bible. But is it wise to ignore on that account all the labours of our great scholars in translation? Ought we still to teach and preach as if physical science and archæology and criticism and translation had never touched the Old Testament? The headmaster of Marlborough College says, 'We ought not.'

But it is then that the difficulty begins. How are the results of recent research to be conveyed to our congregations and our forms in schools? Shall we say that the Old Testament consists of two parts, a human and a Divine? That may be true, but it has not done much for us yet. The

headmaster of Marlborough College does not trouble his pupils with questions of the human and Divine. But he finds that in the Old Testament there are facts and there are lessons. The matters of fact are open to investigation, the lessons are unquestionable for all time. And the lessons are the element of importance. They make the Old Testament what it is.

So the Old Testament is not to be taught as Latin is taught or mathematics. Latin and mathematics are taught not for their own sake but for the discipline they convey. Their main use is to train the memory, to fix the attention, to develop the judgment. That may be done by one Latin author as well as another, by one set of riders or problems as well as another. When that is done the use of Latin and mathematics ceases. The Old Testament may be used for the same purpose. But besides that use there is in the Old Testament an element that is not there for the sake of the memory or the judgment. It is there for the sake of the man. It appeals to what is noblest in the man, to what endures for ever. It goes to the making of character. In the teaching of the Old Testament let all the facts be gathered and sifted with the aid of all the honesty and the instruments at our command; but let it never be forgotten that it is the religious and moral truth in the Old Testament that makes it what it is.

The most recent volume of the 'Contemporary Science' Series is called *The Psychology of Religion*. The sub-title is 'An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness.' But neither title nor sub-title gives much idea of the book. Conversion is its subject. It treats Conversion scientifically. It is really a volume on the Science of Conversion.

The author of the volume is Edwin Diller Starbuck, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education at Leland Stanford Junior University. Leland Stanford Junior University is in America, and no

doubt well known there. Dr. Starbuck also belongs to America, but he is not so well known yet, and so Professor James of Harvard introduces his book and him. Professor James introduces by an apology. He says that when Dr. Starbuck first propounded his plans to him he did not believe in them, and 'damned the whole project with his faint praise.' But Dr. Starbuck stuck to the project, and now—'I must say that the results amply justify his own confidence in his methods, and that I feel somewhat ashamed at present at the littleness of my own faith.'

Professor James believes that Dr. Starbuck's work will bring compromise and conciliation into the long-standing feud of Science and Religion. 'Your evangelical extremist,' he says, 'will have it that conversion is an absolutely supernatural event, with nothing cognate to it in ordinary psychology. Your scientist sectary, on the other hand, sees nothing in it but hysterics and emotionalism, and absolutely pernicious pathological disturbance.' And he adds that for Dr. Starbuck it is not necessarily either of these things. We are not sure that Professor James does Dr. Starbuck justice. We think he would admit that there is often hysterics and emotionalism in conversion; we think that he would hold that it is always a supernatural event. But no doubt he is right when he says that the book will bring Science and Religion closer together. For it will make each less ignorant of the other.

What Professor James objected to when he first heard of Dr. Starbuck's ideas was really his method of setting to work. Dr. Starbuck wanted to reduce conversion to a science. To do that he must gather information. And his proposal was to gather the information by sending questions all around to persons who had been converted. Professor James objected to that. 'The question-circular method of collecting information had already, in America, reached the proportions of an incipient nuisance in psychological and pedagogical matters.' Still Dr. Starbuck carried that

method out. He prepared his questions. They were, as Professor James complained, questions of a peculiarly searching and intimate nature. And he sent them out. Then when the answers came he sifted them, tabled them, and drew conclusions from them. The material which he got to work upon, 'quite apart from the many acutely interesting confessions which it contains,' is evidently sincere, say Professor James, in its general mass. The percentages and averages which Dr. Starbuck has drawn from it 'have proved to possess genuine significance.' His arguments are 'not mathematical proofs, but they support presumptions and establish probabilities; and in spite of the lack of precision in many of their data, they yield results not to be got at in any less clumsy way.'

Dr. Starbuck sent out eleven questions, and each question was divided into many particulars. Obviously they cannot be quoted here. But the third may be quoted as a specimen of the whole: 'What were the circumstances and experiences preceding conversion? Any sense of depression, smothering, fainting, loss of sleep and appetite, pensiveness, occupation disturbed, feeling of helplessness, prayer, calling for aid, estrangement from God, etc.? How long did it continue? Was there a tendency to resist conviction? How was it shown?'

Precautions were taken, says Dr. Starbuck, that the statistics should be fair, *i.e.* that they should represent various vocations, churches, and localities. The ideal conditions for such a study, of course, would be to find a perfectly representative county, city, or locality, and study all the persons in it. Something approaching that was actually found. The question lists were distributed at two conventions in California of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The questions were answered before the women left the room. Then for males two regiments of soldiers, stationed in San Francisco, were canvassed. 'With the assistance of the officers, the boys were taken tent by

tent, and were cross-questioned to determine the accuracy of their memory of the dates asked for.' And then, in addition to other and more isolated cases, seven hundred and seventy-six came from the Alumni record of the Drew Theological (Methodist) Seminary. The latter were used in making up the statistics for the age of conversion only. With this we reach the first chapter of results. Its subject is the age of conversion.

At what age does conversion take place? At any age? Dr. Starbuck does not find it so. Conversions occur almost exclusively between the ages of ten and twenty-five. They begin to occur at seven or eight. Gradually they increase to ten or eleven, then rapidly to sixteen; as rapidly they decline from sixteen to twenty, and gradually fall away. 'One may say that if conversion has not occurred before twenty, the chances are small that it will ever be experienced.'

But from whom are these figures taken? Before we place our confidence in them we must be sure that they are not due to the fact that the persons making the returns were young. We heard of 'boys' of the American army. There *were* 'boys,' though the expression does not mean just what it seems. So Dr. Starbuck eliminates all below forty years of age. Above that age there were a hundred and twenty-two who sent him answers. Of these a hundred and five were converted between five and twenty-three; and only seventeen between twenty-three and forty.

But there are other points of interest. The males and females differ. Females do not actually begin earlier than males, but they culminate earlier. The greater number of females are converted either at thirteen or at sixteen, the greater number of males at sixteen, with only a slightly smaller proportion at fifteen and seventeen. Or to be more scientific, the females have three peaks, thirteen, sixteen, and eighteen; and the males have three peaks, twelve,

sixteen, and nineteen. But if you are a Methodist you may count on one year earlier in every case.

Dr. Starbuck has much to say on the psychological and even on the physiological reasons for these peaks. Into that we need not follow him. But one other matter of practical interest he touches ere the chapter ends. In very many cases there were two impulses to conversion. One came early, at twelve or thirteen. Being rejected, there was no further desire for some years. Then at sixteen to nineteen came the second impulse. So that there is a meaning and a precision in the familiar appeal, 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found,' that we do not always understand.

'An Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.' Our Lord had scant regard, we say, for our theologies. 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' What system of theology will hold that? Based on the Pauline—and what system is not based on St. Paul—our theologies say, 'All have sinned and come short'; 'there is none righteous, no, not one.'

Dr. Whyte of Edinburgh says it was 'Christ's bold and original and paradoxical way of preaching and conversing sometimes.' Dr. Whyte has himself been preaching on Nathanael. His sermon is published in the *British Weekly* of 1st February. And he says that we are not to take Christ too literally. He follows Goodwin and says that Christ sometimes talks flat popery about faith. And he himself says He here talks flat perfectionism about guilelessness. He says that if Nathanael had been wholly without guile Philip would not have found him under the fig tree in Galilee, but under the tree of life itself in the New Jerusalem.

That was the way in which the theologian Augustine brought Nathanael within his theology. Augustine said that Nathanael was not yet found

without guile, but was in the way of being found without guile. He was a good patient. His remaining guile was curable. His hyperbolically gracious Physician would cure him and present him spotless in the Father's presence.

So it is a matter of hyperbolic speech. Or rather, for we do not love to add the adjective 'hyperbolic' to Christ, it was the Physician who, when He undertakes to cure, counts the cure accomplished. In the Intercessory Prayer He said, 'And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world . . . While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name.' Gethsemane and the cross were still before Him. But the will to suffer and succeed was His; and the will with Him was the fact. The will being fixed the Cross was past. He stood on the other side of the grave and said, 'Now I am no more in the world.'

So our theologies are safe. But we must recall an expression of Dr. Whyte's. He said, 'We do not understand Christ's bold and original and paradoxical way of preaching and conversing sometimes.' We do not. Let the adjective 'paradoxical' go, if you will. Let all the adjectives go. We do not understand Christ's way of preaching and conversing sometimes.

In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, we do not understand it. What agonies of interpretation, what disasters of practice, has the Sermon on the Mount occasioned us. 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' We interpret and we practise till we cry, 'Who is sufficient for these things? The Sermon on the Mount is not practicable, and never was meant to be practised.'

It is Christ's method of preaching. He gives the principle in the form of an extreme instance. The occasion for practising the instance may never occur. Who is compelled in these days to go a

mile? Or if it did occur, the probability is that to act it literally out would be to contradict the Saviour's meaning. The instance is extreme; it is impracticable; it is not given to be practised; but it carries the principle with it, and it carries that principle in the most memorable form.

It is a method of preaching, and all great preachers use it. Dr. Whyte uses it. In a sermon published in the previous issue of the *British Weekly* he speaks of unceasing prayer. He tells his hearers to fetch a diary and make a cross on the day's page of it for every time they had to flee from their own heart to the blood of Christ. 'On the mid-day street to-morrow,' he says, 'you would stop to make those sad marks in your book; at your meals you would make them;

at business; at calls; and in conversation with your wisest and best and least sin-provoking friends. At your work,' he goes on, 'at your family worship, in your pew on Sabbath, at the Lord's Table itself; and, if you were a minister, in your very pulpit.'

Did his hearers misunderstand him? Did they say, How exaggerated, how paradoxical? Did they not know that if they brought out their diary 'at calls' and made the cross, they would be contradicting his principle, his lesson, and not fulfilling it? Did they not know that he himself would contradict himself if he took out his diary in the pulpit and made his cross? Dr. Whyte is a preacher. And Jesus Christ is a preacher. And they both use the extreme example to carry the great lesson home.

## The Heathen and Future Probation.

BY THE REV. JOHN C. LAMBERT, M.A., B.D.

AMONG the many problems which have to be faced by the student of eschatology, there is none that is more strangely fascinating than the question of Future Probation. It is a question which, in these days, has come very much to the front, partly, no doubt, because the widespread missionary interests of the Church have brought us into such close contact with the heathen peoples all over the globe, and have compelled us to speculate regarding their destiny in the world to come. It is with special reference to the heathen that I propose to discuss the subject.

I think we have to confess that, apart from the hope of Future Probation, the prospects of the vast majority of the human race for the eternal future look very dark indeed. We have only to remember the countless millions of the heathen world, the life they live, the death they die—and the question forces itself upon us, What becomes of them beyond the grave? Does probation, in their case, absolutely end with death? Or have we any ground for believing, or hoping, that the offer of salvation through Christ may come to

them during the state that intervenes between death and the Judgment? The old orthodoxy said, without much hesitation, that they were all going down swiftly to everlasting destruction. The newer orthodoxy usually seeks to relieve the stress of the problem by dwelling upon the wealth of their natural endowments and opportunities. 'They have the light of nature,' it says, 'that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The following of that natural light amounts to an unconscious following of Jesus Christ. The divine law is written upon every heart, and when men walk according to that inner law, they are certainly accepted with God.' It all sounds very well—so long as we remain in the region of abstractions. But when we come to the actual facts of the situation, it does not bring much help or comfort. Think of the light of nature in most heathen lands, as we really know them. Imagine a state of society in which cruelty and falsehood and impurity are the inheritance of the tribe, and the inveterate habits of everyday life. How much of the 'Light of