

although the words look so similar in English. The Nazarite was a man who desired for a period to set himself apart unto God in an unusual way. The vow represents special consecration for a limited time for unusual service to God. The Hebrew root means separation, or consecration. Nazir is used in this general sense in Dt. xxxiii.16, to designate Joseph as one who was 'separated from' his brethren. The way the subject is introduced here suggests that it is regulating an institution already in existence, rather than instituting something new. Probably one reason for thus regulating it was to draw a sharp distinction between those who were Nazarites and those who were not, by fixing its requirements and making provisions for its termination. There is no reference after this to anyone taking upon himself a Nazarite vow which should last for the rest of his life. The case of Samson (Judg. xiii-xvi) is quite different. He did not assume a vow; instead an obligation was laid upon him before his birth by the command that he should be a Nazarite (or separated one) all his life (Jdg. xiii.5,7, 13-14). Since the Nazariteship of Samson differs in these important features from the provisions of our present ordinance, there is no reason to think that it would agree with them in all other features, even though it is strikingly similar in a number of its characteristics. Cf. the case of Samuel, whose life was consecrated to God by his mother even before his conception (1 Sa.i.11), and that of John the Baptist, where the angel made certain promises to Zacharias about his son's consecration, even before the child was conceived (Lk. i.15).

These regulations are important for the Christian as he considers his relation to things which are not wrong in themselves, but which may prove to be hindrances to his Christian service (cf. Heb. xii.1). The spiritual life of some people may be greatly advanced by giving up certain things which are not harmful in themselves. In the case of others such a course makes their lives unbalanced and produces tensions that retard their spiritual progress. Much harm has been done by forcing on people who desire to serve the Lord vows of abstention from normal life, the implications of which were not realized by those taking them. The widespread corruption of medieval monasticism was