

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES. }  
VOL. XII. No. 29. }

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1867.

WHOLE SERIES. }  
VOL. XXXI. No. 29. }

## Poetry.

### Beautiful hands.

[THE following lines were by Mrs. Ellen M. H. Gates, author of *Your Mission*, which Mr. Philip Phillips' sweet rendering has made familiar to many of our readers.]

SUCH beautiful, beautiful hands,  
They're neither white nor small;  
And you, I know, would scarcely think  
That they were fair at all.  
I've looked on hands whose form and hue  
Sculptor's dream might be,  
Yet are these aged wrinkled hands  
Most beautiful to me.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands—  
Though heart were weary and sad,  
These patient hands kept toiling on,  
That the children might be glad.  
I almost weep, as looking back  
To childhood's distant day,  
I think how these hands rested not  
When mine were at their play.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands,  
They're growing feeble now;  
For time and pain have left their mark  
On hand, and heart, and brow.  
Alas! alas! the nearing time,  
And the sad, sad day to me,  
When 'neath the daisies, out of sight,  
These hands will folded be.

But oh! beyond this shadow-lamp,  
Where all is bright and fair,  
I know full well these dear old hands  
Will palms of victory bear.  
Where crystal streams, through endless years,  
Flow over golden sands,  
And where the old grow young again,  
I'll clasp my mother's hands.

## Religious.

### Baptist Formalism.

A Sermon preached on the anniversary of the Central Baptist Association, 10th June, 1867. BY REV. E. A. CRAWLEY, D. D., at Canning, Eastern Cornwallis.

PUBLISHED BY DIRECTION OF THE ASSOCIATION.  
*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.—Matt. xvi. 6.*

The more we examine the doctrines of the New Testament, the more we discover that principles of great and extensive power are there enunciated. The words of Jesus are seldom, if ever, insulated precepts. The whole world was now departed from God.—Men had become "vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened;" there was no cure but a radical cure; the truths that should restore men to God must go to the root of the matter; original principles of life and action were forgotten, and must be reproduced in tones of authority, and with sweeping application; the sword of the Spirit must be thrust to the very heart of the prevailing wickedness; error must thus be slain; and truth and righteousness once more arise upon the earth.

Thus we can still see how the world of that day was startled by the bold announcement of men's forgiveness of others' sins as a condition essential to any forgiveness of their own: of the higher aim of an unseen but more real kingdom of spiritual life as the only effectual pursuit of happiness in temporal life. These truths assailed and slew a vast portion of the forces of wickedness that then ruled; and these, we plainly see, are principles that extend to all ages, and lie at the foundation of all religious, all moral worth.

The errors assailed in the text are met by the same treatment in relation to both classes referred to; they are assailed by the same weapon of truth. The formality of the Pharisee, and the cold skepticism of the Sadducee are both overthrown by the doctrine of heart-worship as alone acceptable to a spiritual Deity. It is remarkable that both these errors, though at first sight seeming so unlike, and involving a distinction that gave birth to two angrily opposed sects, should be in effect so similar in their hurtful influence on man's religious life. A mere formal worship afforded no training of the affections, of the spirit of man, for a purer world. The denial of that world by those who held "that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit,"

necessarily withheld, in like manner, any training for that world; and therefore, as I suppose, it is that they are thrown together by the Saviour as the injurious leaven against which he warns his disciples in the text, as they are both overthrown by the possession of that spiritual or heart-life by which only can any one be truly warned, or effectually guarded, against the dangerous errors which the text exposed.

The feature of New Testament teaching to which we have referred, that it consists for the most part, not of insulated precepts, but of general principles, prepares us to find every where in Gospel-instruction a present application. Pharisee and Sadducee in their outward structure as sects, have long since passed away; but their error may substantially remain. And so also the truth that defeated the hurtful leaven of their teaching is effectual still against all similar error, and indeed, is, even in the absence of all error, a theme of delightful contemplation, and of soul-cheering power.

I invite attention, therefore, my brethren, for a short time to the error and the remedy which the text suggests. The error is formality, or coldness of heart supplanting all sincere spiritual worship—the remedy is a new heart, a right spirit, a deep and sincere appreciation of God as a Spirit, seeking only such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth.

It may serve to present in an impressive light the character of the error now before us as well as of that spirit which only can produce its overthrow, to observe how early and what way men began to drift in the direction which in Judea led to such forms of character as the Pharisee and the Sadducee.

The difference in the worship of Cain and Abel appears to be intimated, in the brief record given us, in the expression "God hath respect to Abel and to his offering, but to Cain and to his offering He had not respect; the latter being doubtless a cold formality; the former the offering of a sincere and earnest heart. Abel perceived and honoured the spiritual character of the God he worshipped who regarded far more the mind with which the offering was made than the offering itself. Cain, on the contrary we must believe, had a proud satisfaction in his gift, as one who forgot entirely that God looks on the heart, and that without a true sense of God there, the offering was even abominable in His sight.—Now, in this difference between the two brothers we seem to have the embryo presented of that disposition of the human heart that soon spread into every form of dark and debasing idolatry, and thence into skepticism or a denial of spiritual life. The worship of sense, of appetite, of passion, of the world, and the things of the world, such as was seen in the abominable propensities of the doomed cities in the vale of Siddim, and which presently appears in all parts of the world in physical forms claiming to be gods, and sanctioning in their rites all the vile passions that were so rapidly debasing the human race—all these modes of worship constituted a religion of forms in which a pure and holy God was unknown, and every passion that was earthly, sensual, devilish, was permitted, or even required, as an honor essential to the imagined deity before whose obscene idol the miserable multitudes bowed.

The early state of the world, then, presents a conflict, (so far as there remained any opposition to the growing wickedness) of the physical with the spiritual, or, if there was conflict, an abandonment of men, without restraint, towards the extreme of mere physical worship of a pure heart ceased to exist. The world thus loved and served the creature more than the Creator and though the Pharisees and Sadducees, were not strictly idolaters, inasmuch as the open worship of images had perhaps ceased in our Saviour's day, yet the heartless forms of the one, and the skepticism of the other, both showed that they partook of the general alienation, of the human race from any pure spiritual worship, and that Gentile and Jew equally needed a reform that should once more establish the claims of a spiritual worship over that which merely regarded outward observances as of the essence of piety.

It may seem to us so plain from the habits of thought induced by early teaching, that as "God is a Spirit, and seeketh only such to

worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth," formality and deadness of the heart to spiritual affections must be evil, that possibly it may seem uncalled for to make this a matter of lengthened discussion. It is well however, to remember that the way in which as we have seen, the world drifted at the first, is the natural tendency of fallen man; and that if we are shocked at the thought of its recurrence, it may only be the extremes of a disgusting idolatry at which we are shocked, while possibly something of the same nature and essence may be perfectly palatable to us so long as odious extremes are out of sight. Images and outward ceremonies and forms may have ceased, and yet it may be true that a man's disposition is that of the mere physical worshipper, and not of him who worships in the spirit.

Let me therefore remark how *hateful to God* and how *hostile to the true interests of man* formality or deadness in religious worship must necessarily be.

1. It must be hateful to God. Did he not for this—the degeneration of man into the lower, physical, sensual nature, and the consequent loss of all sense of a pure spiritual state—for the worship of sense—appetite—passion—did He not for this destroy the cities of the plain? and infinitely distant from them as men may seem to be placed by the deceptions of a refined outward morality—not formality, deadness, that is, mere physical or animal worship, the stream that filled it, that gathered pollution; indeed, as it rolled on, but was itself, or it had never taken that course.

But scarcely, if at all, less degenerated were the heathen nations generally in the time of Christ and the Apostles. They had fallen into the wide spread error of mere physical worship; that of the spirit, rendering homage to a spiritual God, was unknown; and hence the nature of the error became apparent in that excess of animal and even unnatural indulgence to which the Apostle Paul alludes as "things done by them in secret, of which it was a shame to speak." How do we understand God to regard the scene? Do we not know it to have been with a holy and infinite abhorrence that He looked down on these alienated children of men? Pitying the sinner—nay, loving him, as seen in the gift of His son—must He not have hated with infinite intensity such scenes of guilt as painted by Paul in the first chapter of Romans? Are we capable of conceiving of intense loathing deeper or more terrible than that we find ourselves compelled to ascribe to Jehovah in view of the enormous wickedness of heathenism as it existed in the time of Christ, and for centuries before? But here too the analysis we have made of the disposition and temper of mind that led the world into this extreme of error shows us beyond a doubt that it is to that disposition or temper that we must ascribe all the wrong. Hence formality, deadness of heart, of physical worship alone, rendered to a pure Spirit, is burdened with the charge of the most enormous wickedness men know.

2. But if we deduce its wickedness from its manifest hatefulness in God's sight, no less does the same conclusion follow from its hostility to man's true interests and its opposition to God as desiring the success of those interests.

Man's true interests require that He should worship God. That worship, we have seen, is necessarily spiritual. There is no other real worship. It must be of this character because worship is man in harmony with God, and harmony with God is needful, because if there be not this there must be hostility against Him. We hardly need ask what must be the end of hostility against God, it must be the destruction of all our interests. Men may set their eyes fixedly on what they call their worldly interests, and think these may succeed without God—or without spiritual worship of God. This is not true—but even supposing it true, they cannot help in spite of intense worldliness, sometimes perceiving that the success of his interests in time is but a small part of the welfare of a being who is to live forever. The truant school boy enjoys his stolen liberty, for a time—the escaped felon may for a time go at large; but when retribution comes, the guilty enjoyment of a few days or hours dwindles sadly under the consciousness of deserved punishment now inflicted

ed and felt; and so, in like manner, the stolen enjoyment of the impenitent and unconverted is a poor recompense, in the remembrance of it, when the soul—its day of trial over—finds itself forever unfitted and incapable of enjoying God. Now this, men without religion must sometimes see, and at such a time they are to a great extent sensible that their interests demand the spirit of harmony with God—the power of true spiritual worship; and I think it must then be to them apparent that formality, deadness of heart towards God is terribly hostile to the true interests of man.

But we have said, God designed the success of those interests. Nothing else agrees with His will as we see Him in Christ; every thing else is hostile to His Will. Nay, He designed this in Adam. How much more then in the second Adam? It is incumbent then on us to regard the Gospel, as a scheme for bringing men into that condition of conformity with God which would accomplish man's real interests. The law accepted, loved, and obeyed would have done this; the law failing—the Gospel accepted, would do it; but the Gospel accepted secures spiritual worship, destroys formality and deadness of heart towards God and these therefore, formality and deadness of heart are friends that are, wherever they exist so as to possess the soul as its ruling disposition, are rudely marring a divine plan for accomplishing man's highest interests.—What shall we say of such a disturbance of such a purpose? The true philanthropist the Divine friend of man—in the world, aiming by its arrangements, by Divine Providences, but especially by the Gospel and its wondrous story of unselfish love, to win men over to their true interests; and formality and deadness of heart are fiends that are, wherever they exist, marring that benevolent purpose, and chaining men to their ruin. Was there ever such another sight in the universe! It is monstrous in its error, its enormity, as measured by its daring opposition to God bent on so merciful, so gracious a design—monstrous, by its enmity to the truest, highest interests of all men, interests capable of being accomplished in no other way than by acquiescence with that gracious design; and we may thus understand, why the stern rebukes of the Friend and Saviour of man fell, not on those who were openly practising iniquity, though He excused them not, but on those who by deadness of heart in worship—that is by pretended worship—the formalist justified his wrong, and thus shut himself out from repentance and change, and was helping to drag a nation to its ruin with the proud pretence of serving God. We cannot, I think, easily err in condemning too severely an error which wrought such hideous mischiefs.

One might add here, the wickedness of mocking God with forms of worship without the spirit, as if He could not read the heart; of defrauding ourselves and defrauding the world of the rich stream of divine emotion that flows in the soul of spiritual worship; of withholding the power of prayer, and of example, and of influence; all which are extinct in the character of the mere formalist, and which must rapidly make up against us a tremendous account of loss to the world, and to the cause of righteousness through our means, if we worship not in the spirit; and I might confirm and heighten this view by referring to the judgement on Jerusalem as the most terrible manifestation of God's anger known on earth, and as a judgment hurled expressly against formalism and deadness of heart in worship, as these were the dispositions which evoked from the Jewish heart the hate that crucified the feeling, loving Saviour because of that very spirit of love and of purity that sought in them and in all worshippers the same sincere and feeling spirit; but I forbear—enough is said, I trust, to bring before our minds the nature, the sin, and the danger of formalism and deadness in religion; let what remains of our time be given to an endeavor to point out what particular application the subject may seem to make to ourselves at the present time.

We, as a people, possibly, are sufficiently indoctrinated from our earliest years in the truth, that nothing in religion that is not spiritual,—that to become Christians men must become "new creatures;" and that the new creation consists of the springing up in the soul, through faith in Christ, of a spirit of