Divine Moulds and Human Keepers.

BY REV. A. F. M'EWEN, WINDSOR, N. S.

"Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." etc.—2 Tim. 1: 13.

The apostle James gives us a very practical definition of religion when he says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." From an analysis of the word "religion" it would seem to indicate a "building anew" or "back;" or, if proceeding from another *root*, to "gather" or "collect again," etc. In a general way we may say of religion that it is the relationship of man to his Maker in active exercise. It is nothing less than a moral fault when this exercise is wanting or neglected. It is more than a moral fault; it is an eternally fatal fault, for any man to permit his spiritual nature forever to crave satisfaction, and never to give it that satisfaction for which it craves. We are left without excuse in this matter. Our Creator has clearly revealed to us the way in which to worship, serve, and love Him. He has given to us in this last dispensation few and simple outward forms, with an unlimited reach of spiritual truth and reality. The external is not much, but the internal, the spiritual, is mighty and manifold. These spiritual verities are not resolvable into mere intellectual theorems or logical deductions of the mind. There is a something about them, and a vast something at that, which the wisdom of the world cannot reach. It can neither give nor take away the inheritance of true religion. In the incarnation, the Almighty Father has not only revealed Himself, but also has laid hold on us and communicated to us the acceptable way of fulfilling those sacred obligations which we owe to Him; the fulfilling of which makes us exceedingly happy and elevates us into that state of being, in which we have fellowship with God, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The true value of religion is in this spiritual aspect of it. But notwithstanding this superiority of the spiritual over the external, the external itself is not without its value. The injunction is, "Hold fast the form." The externals of religion have an important office to fulfil, namely, to help conserve "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," and to throw spiritual truths into clearer outline. It was to this end, we believe, that Paul exhorted Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound" or healthful words. The life itself is endangered if the "form" or "mould" is tampered with. Our text resolves itself into two divisions, and

I. THE COMMUNICATED "FORM" OR PATTERN.

Of himself man would not know how to approach God and worship Him. Indeed, if not prevented by extraordinary grace he would soon darken any light thrown upon an open way, and subvert or break all God-given patterns for worship. Somehow neither the offering nor the offerer was acceptable in the instance of Cain. Korah and his company wickedly assumed the sacred offices of offering to God, but His wrath soon made it apparent that they had transgressed. "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died." It would seem well nigh impossible for that ancient people to content themselves with the patterns given them for worship—idolatry was their great weakness and their great sin.

There always was, and always will be, for us communicated patterns. Nothing less would do, and even then, it would not seem sufficient for erring truants, who do not find variety or gaudy show sufficient in the simple forms accompanying a spiritual religion.

The *sacrifices* of the old dispensation were very fully particularized. For purification by "the waters of separation" no victim other than "a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish," would do. To transgress this law would be to meet with sure retribution. Thus, too, all the sacrifices were most specifically and particularly described, and a minute observance of these enjoined upon the people.

When the Lord communicated the pattern of the *tabernacle* and all its furnishings to Moses, again and again the injunction was iterated, "See thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount." Exceeding great care must be taken that nothing was added, and that nothing was subtracted; otherwise the displeasure of the Lord was soon known.

It was thus also with respect to the offices and functions of the *priests* and *Levites*. All approach, all service, all sacrifices, all worship, was to be thus and so, as the Lord commanded concerning these. The man who dared to transgress did so at his peril. It was apparently a small offence for Uzza to put forth his hand to steady the tottering ark; but it was not his business to do it, and for his transgression he was there and then smitten by death.

The modern plea of "it makes no difference" is a very ancient one, and the ancient records of this very specious deception, and its accompanying retribution from the hand of the Lord, are given unto us that we should be warned thereby, lest we should fall into the same grievous errors, and into the same bitter grief as a consequence.

In the new dispensation we have a new order of things. The burdens of the old ceremonial have been cast off, and a new order of exercises and qualities demanded. The true light shines in this dispensation; all types and shadows have faded out in Christ, who is "the true light," who Himself took up the requirements of the law, fulfilling them in Himself, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us—and from thence became one great and new lawgiver. We are now "under law to Christ." If His ministration of the old was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministration of the new! If the sanctions of the old were inflexible, shall not the demands of the new be equally firm? and the excuse of the transgressor much less, because light and freedom and grace and love abound?

The New Testament is full of patterns, as also was the Old. It is very emphatic in this, for example, that there is salvation in no other name than in Jesus Christ. This seems narrow and compressed, but it is the New Testament mould. The means of justification for guilty men by *faith* in Jesus Christ is made so simple, so bare, so within the reach of all, that men at all times have not ceased trying to improve upon it, to the destruction of untold myriads. It is the New Testament mould nevertheless, and shall abide to the end of time as the sole and only means of justification for poor sinners before God. Paul says to the Galatians, Let the man, or should he be an angel, who preaches another gospel than the one he preached to them, be anathema. And a little further on in the letter he shows where the ground of his fears lay. "Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you." "Having begun in the spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" You began well, but whither are you being led? Thus of the Galatians.

The forms of our worship, as enjoined upon us, are definite enough. We *read* the Word for our enlightenment and direction. We lift our hearts in *prayer*, for thus we address the throne of a heavenly Father. We *sing*, for we want to praise His great and holy name. We *speak* because we are sent with a message, and the Gospel is entrusted to our proclamation of it. We *give*, for there is blessedness in it. But all these taken together, or singly, if they lack spiritual discernment, do not constitute worship. God is "a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." This is the pattern for acceptable worship; all other offerings must be worthless, or worse than worthless, in the sight of God.

There is freedom now, far in advance of the freedom of two thousand years ago. Every individual now comes for himself into the immediate presence of Christ the Lord, by faith. He is the great intercessor and the only advocate. He is the only priest we need. We come to Him and from Him directly receive the forgiveness of our sins. He is the way and there is none other. These it is and divinely communicated; who will dare add to it? or take away from it? And yet as a mould it is everywhere tampered with or broken, and something else substituted therefor.

There are qualifications for *church membership*; there is church *organization*—there are church *ordinances*, and for all these there is but one lawgiver, even Christ. His word is very definite about everything. There are patterns or forms for this life which we have from heaven, as it expresses itself in all its holy activities among us. Let us get the life, and withal let us aim at the proper, the healthful, the divine expression of it. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." It is wondrous mercy that the Lord has given us these patterns. Whither would we drift without them? Whither indeed do we drift with them?

II. THE COMMUNICATED RESPONSIBILITY RESPECTING THIS PATTERN, "HOLD FAST," ETC.

Man has a weakness for inventions; he always had, and especially in the matter of religion. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Of all his follies this would seem to bear the palm, that he can improve upon the revelation of God, and the wisdom of Jesus Christ. But so it is. The simple, beautiful, and chaste bride of the Lord as known, governed and led by the apostles, in the name of Christ, would scarce be known now, because she has so much of this world's adornments and trappings upon her. The world courted her favor, secured her hand, and now church and world walk together. A revolution is needed, in the throes of which a divorce shall be secured from this adulterous connection, and the bride of the Lord restored to Him again. And, indeed, she should come back with weeping and contrition, for she has basely deserted Him who bought her with His own blood.

In this matter of conserving or holding fast the form of sound words, the whole church is held responsible. Chiefly, indeed, does the blame of defections and heresies rest with the elders of the church. They are set over the churches as under shepherds; they are to watch for the souls of men as those who must give an account; they are to feed the flock of God which He has purchased for His own possession. But, while this is true, the responsibility is not lifted from the churches. These, as well as those who have the oversight, are held responsible for the custody of all sacred things.

A most effective way to conserve this sacred trust appears to be along the line of simple and direct obedience. Obedience, this marvellous quality! so hard to submit to and so hard to retain, but which, if we possess and keep it, is the most pleasing of all our activities to the Master, and beneficial to ourselves. Three things are included in this ought to be coveted quality; and *first*, we cannot obey unless we *know*. We must know what His commandments and ordinances are, before we can yield obedience to them. The securing of obedience is therefore largely dependent on this other, namely, knowledge. The text book which we ought to know the best is the Bible, but too frequently it is the one least known. There are members of Christian churches in abundance, who know more about the last novel out than about the Holy Bible. Unfortunately this oldest and only best book in the world is most novel to many. We need a revival along the line of scripture study, and especially in our homes. To have a mine of gold unworked in our very houses does not savour of much wisdom, does it? God's word is such a mine. Let us dig into it, that we may win the knowledge necessary to the possession of the holy mind and will as revealed.

To this knowledge must be added the important factor of *subjection*. We very frequently have knowledge much beyond our subjection to that which we know to be right and good. The imperious will refuses to bow even to God. The desire to exercise power ourselves leads us to hold out in insubordination to the demands of our Creator and Judge. This is surely the greatest folly. The judgments of the Lord are sure to flow over and overwhelm any people who do not submit themselves to Him. His will is, and will be, supreme everywhere. Then, brother, bow to His requirements. Have you the knowledge of His will? hasten to do it. There is no time to lose. Little delays are dangerous.

To the preceding may be added the third, namely, *willingness* to do whatsoever may be commanded. To act in the spirit sometimes manifested: I'll do it just to get through with it and have it out of the way, or I'll do it because others do the same, and I should not like to be considered odd, or I'll do it in order to be noticed by others for doing it, or I'll do this thing because it will repay me to do it, is not the way. The Master wants us to serve Him. He wants us to *know* His will. He wants us to *subject* ourselves to His will, and He wants us to do this will of glad choice, that is *willingly*. His followers are all free, and are exhorted to stand in the liberty of freemen.

The holding fast of the pattern of sound words directly points to the rejection of all that is not "sound" or "healthful." "Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Thus our Saviour spoke, and we can rest assured in all His utterances. Whatever may be among us that is not of the Father is doomed to be bound into bundles and cast into the fire. In this connection we desire to look into some customs among Christians which, we are persuaded, are not for our good, and what is more, we are persuaded contrary to the revelation given us by our Heavenly Father. Two such customs have just been concluded in many churches. Multitudes of our fellow-citizens have, with more or less conscience in the matter, been sedulously instructed to observe Lent and Easter. Because of these we are led to enquire, whence have these come? and why observed? with what authority do they come? and what is their tendency? We may say at once with respect to all these feasts and fasts common now-a-days, the New Testament knows nothing. Neither our Saviour nor His apostles, nor yet the "fathers" so called, laid any such observances as a rule or otherwise upon the churches. They savour of the old dispensation and not of the new. The new wine of the gospel rends these old bags or skins; they do not fit each other. They debase rather than elevate; they externalize rather than cultivate the spiritual. Lent proposes to be a commemoration and imitation of the forty days' fast of our Lord, when tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Immediately after His baptism, (which, by the way, most observers of Lent refuse to follow Him in), Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. A mighty and important struggle lay before Him. He entered into this struggle with fasting and undoubtedly with prayer also. It is, perhaps, needless to say that this conflict ended in victory for our Lord. The enemy was vanquished, and Christ was victorious. Now, Christian people propose to celebrate this by the observance of a forty days' fast, at the close of which fast a time of feasting is the common practice. The question naturally rises in the mind of a New Testament Christian, "Who hath required this at your hand?" or why single these out from among other events in the life of our Lord? Why tempt ye the Lord by imposing a yoke upon His people similar to the old forms from which Christ set His people free? It appears to us, that our Master would say in the presence of these and their pleaders, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

These self-inflicted and affected rigors smack considerably of the old Pharisaic fasting, condemned by Christ. They do thus and so "that they may appear unto men to fast." In the nature of things, is it not evident that we cannot offer our penitence in a heap? Each day's life needs its own confession before God; each day needs the penitential cry "Lord have mercy." To offer signs of penitence for forty days, which are designated as the "penitential season," and then indulge in a round of social festivities, reminds us of a little Scotch laddie who, watching his father open the herring barrel, and thinking of the many delays for "thanks" or "grace" at as many meals, suggested the advisability of having *one long* "thanks" offered over this barrel, in order to avoid the many impatient waitings for successive thanks at successive meals. Thus, respecting this "penitential season" and the succeeding round of festivities and gayeties. This suits human nature first rate. Do up religion in a heap when it suits, and then revert to the world and the flesh. The Master's rule for fasting is quite distinct from the above. We prefer going to Him for a description of what fasting is. Neither the Romish, nor the Greek, nor yet the Jewish church will do for us. "But thou when thou fastest anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret," &c.

The festival of Easter proposes to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. This is an event of wondrous gladness indeed. It should make all Christians exuberant with joy, and that constantly. Every Lord's day should be a day of spiritual festivity. We think we could improve vastly upon the ordinary "Easter" observance. It comes once only in the year. Now we would have special preparations for every *first day* of the week; we would be astir earlier in these mornings than in other mornings; we would not give one preference over another; in all of them we would have brought the precious "nard" for Christ's anointing. All Christians should rise earlier, be brighter and happier on Sunday mornings than other mornings. To lie abed later is taking a mean advantage, and may well come under the sin of robbing the Lord. "Easter" is part pagan and part Jewish-Christian. It is indeed a mongrel thing. It partakes of the Jewish passover—of Christ's resurrection, and of the Anglo-Saxon celebration of the goddess of spring, Eostre. It is thus in part a survival of Anglo-Saxon mythology. Wranglings and quarrelings and dissensions and excommunications sufficient, mark the track of its growth, until finally Rome decided how it should be for the greater part of Christendom. The Greek church has its own way, and its own time, for attending to the business of this celebration, while a small portion cling to the most reasonable development of it, viz., those who are governed by the Jewish calculation of the paschal feast. Now, "who hath required this at your hand," in this or any other generation? Is it not before God a vain and uncalled for oblation? In it we see a survival of Judaism, remodelled by Rome and other ecclesiastical centres, with a salting of Christianity upon its surface. It is a human tendency and must be strictly guarded. To make the occasion of our Lord's resurrection an occasion for display in outward show, is to miss the mark entirely. It is the world's way, but it is not God's way. He did not ask the disciples to get up a display for Him. Rather He guarded them carefully against all such carnal manifestations. Indeed, afterward, they were plainly told of defections and heresies along the lines of "forbidding to marry" and "abstaining from meats," etc. All such self-imposed rigors at certain stated seasons, and their corresponding license in the opposite direction are manifestly of human origin, and human worth. The Master has not commanded them; and carried out to their logical results, there is imposed upon those who accept them an empty and great show of externalities, with only a modicum of spirituality.

The best Christians find themselves wholly unable to reach the excellence and the activities laid down for us in Bible patterns. We need not wish to add to them. Indeed this would be the old Pharisaic sin of binding heavy burdens for men's shoulders, or of rejecting the commandments of God, to teach human traditions. Wherever such conduct is, it needs the scathing rebukes of the divine Master again. The spirit of this new and last dispensation is one of child-like liberty and Christ-like activity. Externals are the least, while spiritual life is the great desideratum. The temptation of the Lord and His resurrection we would seek to think of as we ought. We earnestly desire that they should influence us to greater devotion and activity in the work of His kingdom. But in all things religious we take our instruction from headquarters, even from Christ Himself. We take the New Testament in whole, as well as in part; we take the Bible all together, "looking unto Jesus" in everything, for He is our life, and He also is the only proper interpretation of this life. "Hold fast the form of sound words," etc.

Enthusiasm.

BY REV. GEORGE M. HOWE.

Our English word "enthusiasm" is derived from a Greek term, which, literally rendered, means "God-indwelling," and has reference to the fire that is kindled within the human heart by the Holy Spirit. Without this fervent spirit it is impossible to achieve anything in the Christian life that is worthy the name of Christ. The same is true in every department of life, whether it be in the pursuit of art, music, science, or reform. To obtain success, the heart must be fired with a noble purpose, the thought must be stimulated by the constant presence of a high ideal.

We are accustomed to hearing this said by educators who wish to arouse men and women to their best endeavor, and the general verdict is that they are right in laying so much stress upon the matter. But when we come to apply it to the Christian life, they demur, and one not infrequently hears it said of such persons that they have zeal without knowledge,—in plain English, that they are fanatics or bigots.

If we look into the New Testament, we shall find that the great Founder of Christianity was an enthusiast, and that His immediate disciples and the prince of apostles were also enthusiasts. Association with the Lord Jesus Christ had made them such. Ever since then, whoever has come in contact with the Saviour and been filled with His spirit has become an enthusiast. Every Christian reformer, every missionary of the cross, every successful winner of souls, has been an enthusiast. Enthusiasm of the right sort is always justifiable.

A man drops from the deck of a steamer into the sea. You shout vigorously for some one to come and help. You rescue him from a watery grave. The occasion justifies your excitement. None of your fellow-voyagers would think for a moment of condemning you, but would rather unite in commending you for your earnest efforts to save the drowning man.

Is there not a thought here for all Christians to consider earnestly and prayerfully? How can we be made a power in the world for the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom? Have we not a hint in the words of Paul when he writes "fervent in spirit"? Let us pray for a fuller measure of this spirit, and a mighty work will be done for Christ in the world.
—*Journal and Messenger.*

—It is not worth while being religious unless you are altogether religious. It won't do to be merely playing at religion, or having religion on us as a bit of veneer. It must saturate us. Some seek first the kingdom of God. Others put it in a second place. Their prayer meetings are dull, and fellowship gatherings are uninteresting. But the moment a man begins to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things are right. Any man who has not heartily thrown himself into the kingdom of God, but who is seeking secondly the kingdom of God, may be religious; but there is something he loves more, and both worlds are spoiled to him. He has neither the cream of the one nor of the other. The great desideratum of the present day is not more Christians, but a better band of them.—*Prof. Drummond.*

—Leave us to the blessedness of presiding as queens in our households, surrounded by subjects whose hearts are our own. Preserve to us the sweet ministries, the tender ties, the holy influences of Christ appointed homes, where little children are to be led to Him, where a husband's faith and courage are to be supported, and his wife's love and sympathy send forth to life's battles in the spirit of a conqueror. Enable us to continue to give our time and sympathies to the fatherless and the widow, the sick and imprisoned. Save us from being forced into public life and public places, to legislate for a church whose progress without our hands (however capable), has been most phenomenal, lo; these many years. Fathers and brethren, save us from seeing ourselves perpetually represented by a few, who, deprived of, or neglectful of, home ties and occupations, live in a public atmosphere, until they can breathe no other.—*Nashville Christian Advocate.*

—Eternity is crying to you louder and louder as you near its brink. Rise, be going! count your resources; learn what you are not fit for, and give up wishing for it; learn what you can do, and do it with the energy of a man.—*Robertson.*

A Difficult Problem.

We confess to a great deal of sympathy with the French Roman Catholics in Manitoba in resisting the suppression of the public use of their language and the appropriation of their school taxes to other than Romish schools. Whether the fact that these were the privileges that were secured to them by the rebellion under Riel should add to or detract from this sympathy is a point on which opinions will differ. Supposing the rebels of 1870 to have been the representatives of those who are to-day protesting against the withdrawal of their privileges, their opponents will say that having obtained them as highwaymen they should, like highwaymen, be made to disgorge, while their friends will say that those are worthy of all honor who resist unto blood the invasion of things they hold sacred, and that having so obtained these privileges they are all the more warranted in insisting upon them, for are not men always most tenacious of those immunities for which their fathers took up arms. Turning from the historic view to the facts as they are, we find a race who can fairly claim an equal share at least in the discovery and earliest settlement of that country, enjoying to-day distinct recognition as a race in the permitted use of their language, and in special privileges accorded to their religion. Is it natural for them to see without the strongest protest this distinct recognition withdrawn? On the other hand, it is fair to say that the preservation of race distinction is prejudicial to the national unity which is our first national interest. It is also to be said as far as the French language is concerned that while a source of expense to the province, it is hardly ever used in the legislature or in public affairs, except as a prescribed form or for the purpose of asserting the right to use it. Indeed, except, perhaps, in some trials in the courts it is almost never convenient to use it. The protest on behalf of the Roman Catholic schools rests on a more serious footing. Here is a distinct matter of conscience. Rightly or wrongly it is against the conscience of those Roman Catholics who believe all they are taught, and most of the women do so, to send their children to schools where the Romish religion and reverence for the clergy is not a principal part of the training. If, being required to pay taxes for the maintenance of the common schools, they withhold their children from them and pay over again for their education, they prove their faith by their works, and feel that in this matter of conscience they are plundered by the law. True, say the advocates of common schools, the Romanist who refuses to use the common schools is by not doing so the loser of benefits he might enjoy, but he is not the loser of the benefit for which the tax is imposed. The object of the tax is not to relieve parents of the burden of their children's education but to protect the community against an uneducated generation, incompetent to govern the country. All are equal sharers in whatever benefit of this kind accrues from the school system. Clearly, if such is the purpose of the public education, the education should be of such a sort as to fit people to be independent voters and not to vote like sheep at the bidding of a superior. The abstract reasoning in favor of common schools is strong. First, a country governed by the popular vote must insist that the people be educated. Secondly, it cannot so insist without providing education for all who cannot get it otherwise. Thirdly, the State has no right to enforce or teach any religion, therefore, no form of religion can be taught at the public expense, at least so long as any of the taxpayers object. The great force of all this is evidently felt by the Roman Catholic bishops, as, indeed, it is by all opponents of common schools. They, therefore, feel it necessary to carry their objections further. This they do in the present case by declaring that the common schools which are to be by law forced on all the population of Manitoba are to all intents and purposes Protestant schools and are to be used as a Protestant propaganda. If certified that there was truth in this charge in the case of schools supported by Roman Catholics, we should certainly find as much fault as the bishops themselves. If, however, it is only advanced by their lordships because they feel their argument to be weak without some such claim, it constitutes a stronger argument against them than any their opponents could frame. It must be owned that the question is by no means so simple a one as the advocates of purely secular state schools try to make out. Entirely bad as the Roman Catholic schools are, as schools for free citizens, it is the conscientious duty of a large proportion of Roman Catholics to demand them and no other, and, while this is the case, the establishment of a system of purely secular common schools is fraught with immense difficulties. What we should like to see would be more pressure at the other end. The franchise and all public functions should be determinedly withheld from the illiterate. The bishops of Rome would like such a regulation about as little as they like the secular schools, but they would commit themselves seriously were they to say much against it.—*Montreal Witness.*

—A soft answer turneth away wrath. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.—*Solomon.*

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