



Headstone Symbols: Hand Pointing Down

The hand of God is a common Victorian tombstone symbol. An index finger pointing up symbolizes the hope of heaven, but what if the finger points down?

We neednâ€™t worry about â€œDear wife and motherâ€• Fanny Eliza Bence. The downward pointing hand does not doom poor Fanny to eternal damnation. Rather, the hand of God is reaching down from the clouds to collect her soul for heaven.

God was rarely depicted in early Christian art. Victorians took the fourth commandment seriously:

â€œYou shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven aboveâ€•

The commandment doesnâ€™t leave much wiggle room, but being mortal, wiggle they did. Since the Bible contains countless references to â€œthe hand of God,â€• Victorians figured His hands were fair game.

Like many Victorian mourning symbols, the downward-pointing finger rarely travels alone. The top of the headstone often contains swirling clouds, symbolizing the heavens. Cut flowers, like Fannieâ€™s, are often present, symbolizing the mortality of life.

You can find Fanny Eliza Bence in the historic Odd Fellows section 29, Row 13, south of the upper mausoleums in Union Cemetery located at 650 Bee Street in Placerville, CA.

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