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POWER IN RELIGION AND NOT FORM THE GROUND OF FELLOWSHIP.

There is a form of religion—that is to say godliness has an outward manifestation. Life assumes a form, hence we judge of the kind of life, if a flower, a tree, a fish, a bird. These may be petrified, yet the fossil shows that there has been life. The heaven-born spirit of true religion wears a garment whereby it walks the earth visible to the eye of man. The ethereal assumes shape—the spiritual is clothed. This form appears in confession of Christ—of his word, of his name, of his cause. God does not condemn the form. It is beautiful. Worship, praise, and prayer. Sabbaths, blessed days of rest—Ordinances—these are means of grace. Helps, through which the substance may be reached. The danger lies in being satisfied with the form—saying it is enough—we have Abraham to our father.

There is a power in religion. This is the jewel, that the casket. The one the shell, the other the kernel. The shell may be broken and the kernel remain, or the shell may be whole, when the heart is rottenness. The fruit may be fair and please the eye, but corruption, from the unseen entrance of a worm, may be rank. When there is no sap in the centre of the tree it is dead, and though its tall form may stand for a time, by-and-by the stormy wind will prove its decay. The cases of a watch—the dial-plate—the index—these fail to tell the progress of time, the internal machinery must be there, and in order, and in operation. The power of religion must be felt—there is a deep seated, heartfelt power. A life power. Religion reigning in the heart. The power of religion is not merely to say prayers, but to live a prayerful life, looking ever up to God—not merely to be a member of the church on earth, but to be a true member of Christ—not merely to have a correct creed, but to have truth influencing all our conduct. It is a magnet to draw the soul heavenward. There is power to break up old and sinful habits. It rivals the power of gold, and it disarms death of his sting.

There may be a denial of this power, attended with zeal for the form. The form may stand for the power—the letter for the spirit. Clothed in forms, not in the righteousness of Jesus, the soul may hope for salvation—sacramental efficacy—dependence in man to give a passport to heaven—sentimental feeling—religious meetings without Christ or the power of the Spirit—these may delude the soul. The denial of the power of religion, however associated with privileges that raise their possessor to the heaven of Capernaum, risks the deep abasement of the soul to hell. An eloquent writer has said, "Did it ever occur to you to examine how little is said by the sacred writers about observing the Sabbath and the sacraments; about public worship and religious