

in the house of its professed friends, the effort to uncover the canker may save the body.

I am going to suppose that one reason for the perpetuity of sin is found in the propitiating of those authorities that pronounce against it;—that the sinner in order to sin easily has to cheat some authority that pronounces against him. Sin is too base a thing to be committed nakedly; and unbelief, which is as damning a sin as can be committed, is too ugly a thing even for unbelievers, except it be dressed up in such garb as will render it passably palatable. And for this purpose I suppose the soul's enemy provides a wardrobe from which the sinner may provide himself a mantle or robe in which he may disguise his unsanctified body. To be successful in this, he must needs tamper with whatever authority claims from him, in morals, what he is unprepared to give.

The true magistrate of the soul is conscience. Dr. Young has spoken of it as "*God in man*." And indeed when we find it praising us when we do well, and punishing us in evil-doing, we are not far astray when we speak of conscience as the soul's magistrate. It approves when we do right, and it checks us when we do wrong. Accordingly, when an evil is to be committed, if it be done easily, this power must be bribed, either by binding it, or by so dressing up the evil that it will appear less evil than it is. And the ways by which this is accomplished are manifold.

One of these methods of propitiation is *THE ALLUSION TO CUSTOM*.

The frequency of questionable actions, unfortunately, has been the argument in extenuation of the actions themselves. A long list of names some of which are associated with deeds which have immortalized them, are often snatched at as furnishing ample authority for the innocence of wrong. The sin that was committed at first with a shudder, has, by trilling with it and by its association with so many other lives, assumed a kind of virtuous character, that it becomes even to the perpetrator a thing to be condoned at least. History is made to do service here; and the theft is excused because the Israelites borrowed from the Egyptians without returning, and the violation of the Sabbath is excused because the corn at one time was plucked on that day. And a worse sin than either is blessed because a David got to Heaven after its commission, and anger finds shelter in the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. And in a thousand kindred ways of this sort is sin, in this age, clad in false lustre.

Another of these false robes, in which the sinner of to-day seeks to disguise sin, and cheat his conscience, is one which Adam left behind him. I have no name for it, but it is intended to proclaim the fallacy "*that sin is a necessity*." The sinner, detecting certain appetites and lusts within himself, charges home upon the circumstance of his inheritance of a corrupt nature, the guilt of his life, and not only excuses himself to conscience, but satisfies his judgment by the false assertion, "*I can't help it*." Who will gauge the perpetuity of sin under this false garb? And who will compute the mischief that has been done in this direction by the mistaken Calvinistic view, taken of Paul's expression, "*When I would do good evil is present with me*."