The Simplicity That Is in Christ

ROBERT S. CANDLISH

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"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." — 2 Cor. 11:3.

The simplicity that is in Christ stands here contrasted with the subtilty of the serpent: and the instance given of the serpent's subtilty in his beguiling Eve illustrates what is meant by the simplicity which is opposed to it. In that first temptation, all on the part of God was abundantly simple; the command, not to eat of the tree, with the warning, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was, in fact, simplicity itself. On the other hand, the subtilty of the tempter is apparent in the complex and manifold pleading which he holds with Eve. God has but one argument against eating; Satan has many for it; and there is no surer sign of subtilty than the giving of many reasons for what a single good one would better justify and explain. The apologist, conscious of a weak and indefensible case, usually has recourse to the multiplying of excuses, often enough irrelevant and inconsistent, as if the heaping of a number of weak explanations upon one another could make up for the impotency and insufficiency of each one of them apart. And the tempter also avails himself of the same artifice. He does not appeal to a single motive or depend on a single plea for success. He prevails by the variety rather than the strength of his weapons, as if he must first confound, before he can conquer, his victim. First self-love and self-confidence are appealed to; suspicion is awakened; and discontent begins to rankle within. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Then, to lull asleep the just fear of God's wrath, as well as to mar the full love of his goodness, the specious insinuation comes in, "Ye shall not surely die." And to perplex the matter still more, obscure and ambiguous hints are thrown out as to the possible or probable issue of events, and the mind is cast loose on a vague calculation of chances and consequences: "Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." Thus complicated is the subtilty of the serpent; his lies, because they are lies, must be multiplied, to prop up one another. But truth is one; and as there is nothing but truth, so there is nothing, and there can be nothing, but simplicity, in Christ: simplicity, as opposed to subtilty, is the characteristic feature of Christ himself, and of all that is his.

The simplicity that is in Christ! It is a precious and blessed quality; and it may be discerned all throughout his great salvation; in every stage and department of that salvation.

I. In his own finished work of righteousness and atonement.

II. In the free offer of the Gospel founded thereupon.

III. In the fulness of believers as divinely one with himself.

IV. In their following of him as their captain and example; and

V. In their expectation of him as their judge and reward, — in all these five instances of his grace, on the one hand, and of your experience and hope, as his people, on the other, this distinguishing element may be noted, — and in contrast with the subtilty of the serpent, we may trace the simplicity that is in Christ.

I. There is simplicity in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, as the servant of the Father, and the substitute, surety, and saviour of the guilty. It was in this character that he came into the world: and with entire simplicity did he sustain it. It was the single object for which he lived and died. Indeed, without an apprehension of this leading aim, the Lord's ministry on earth is unintelligible, self-contradictory, and, as we might almost say, marked not by simplicity, but by manifold subtilty. Every theory that has been or can be proposed of the suffering life and cruel death of Jesus, the Holy One of God, apart from the recognition of his vicarious character and standing, fails, and must fail, to satisfy a simple mind. The whole story is a confused, inconsistent, inextricable, incomprehensible enigma; a dark riddle, as regards the government of God; a strange anomaly that shocks the moral sentiments of men. It is the doctrine, or rather the fact, of his substitution for you, which alone harmonises and hallows all. On any other supposition, the evangelical records are as void of clear meaning as any complicated tale of romantic fiction. At the very best, they are vague anecdotes and reminiscences of a remarkable person, of whose conduct and fate no intelligible solution can be imagined. It is the atonement that gives significancy and unity to the whole. Let him be owned as the righteousness of God, in your stead, and the propitiation for your sins, what simplicity is there in Christ! Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

That there is no mystery here, — nothing that transcends man's finite understanding, and baffles his restless curiosity, — we are far from saying. The substitution of that Holy One in the room of the guilty must ever be a wonder on earth, in heaven, and in hell. But oh! is there not a simplicity in it that comes home to the heart of a poor despairing sinner? He lies bitten by the deadly fiery serpent, stung with remorse for sin, racked and tortured with the fear of eternal woe. Behold the serpent lifted up in the wilderness! Behold the Son of man, made sin, made a curse, for such precisely he is, for the lost world of which he is a most miserable portion, for sinners, of whom he is chief: behold this Jesus, living, dying, lifted up upon the cross, taking the place, doing the work, bearing the doom, of the condemned victims of everlasting justice; — what simplicity as well as worthiness in the Lamb that was slain! How clear, how definite and precise, how plain and unequivocal is this marvellous transaction, this real atonement for sin! "Deliver from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow." Let the prisoner go free; let the guilty criminal be acquitted, justified, accepted; for an infinitely worthy substitute has been provided, to undertake all his responsibilities, to meet all his obligations, to answer every charge in law against him, every demand in justice upon him, to plead for him in the trial, to stand for him in the judgment.

Alas! that this simplicity that is in Christ should ever fail to satisfy. Nay, that it should so often — this very simplicity — be the very offence of the cross itself! But it is the policy of Satan to mar it, and by his subtilty to corrupt your minds from its simplicity, from the simplicity that is in Christ, and him crucified. Hence the endless questions he has contrived to raise in connection with it, respecting the secret counsels of the divine mind, the abstract principles of the divine government, and other the like great

matters and things too high for us; as if it were our part to care for God, rather than for ourselves, in this transaction, — to be more anxious about his interests and concerns than about our own, — to view the cross, in short, rather in its possible bearing on the unknown arrangements of heaven, than in its actual application to the wants and woes that press so sorely on the sinner here on earth. For it is a great thing for the enemy to have this whole affair transferred from the region of reality to the region of speculation; and hence, taking advantage, not unfrequently, of the ingenuity even of wise and holy men, he tempts them to embarrass the simple fact on which the Gospel rests, with sundry more than doubtful disputations on the philosophy or rationale of it.

It is indeed a noble exercise of mind to aim at seeing how God in his glorious majesty, as well as we in our miserable need, may stand related to the events of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary; nor is the inquiry an unprofitable or unlawful one. The doctrine of the Atonement is a most reasonable doctrine; and to the understanding, spiritually enlightened, it opens up the largest views of God's character and ways, while it inspires the lowliest sense of the exceeding sinfulness of our sin. But it is still not to the wise and prudent, but to babes, that these things are revealed; and as the Lord's new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, so do they delight in the simplicity that is in Christ. Ah! it is first as a fact, as an actual substitution of himself in their room, that they, as sinners, come to know the Saviour's cross, and it is through their acquaintance with redemption, as a real and literal transaction of awful import between the righteous Father and his eternal Son on their behalf, that they come, by means of that transaction, to have a blessed and rapturous insight into the very mind and heart of the Godhead, to perceive that God is light, to feel that God is love.

For subtle intellects, however, the snare of Satan's subtilty is often too seductive. Tempted to look on this great sight from a divine, rather than a human point of view, approaching it, as it were, from the side of God's high throne, rather than from the abyss of fallen man's misery and guilt, they seem to consult for God rather than for themselves, to settle beforehand how God ought to act, rather than believe what he tells as to how he has acted. And so they frame a theory of atonement and redemption accommodated to their own ideas of what the general government of God must be. They speak vaguely of his public justice as the ruler of the universe, rather than of his private justice in his controversy individually with themselves. They profess to determine what the ends of his universal administration demand, rather than what every sin deserves. They find manifold good and plausible reasons of state, so to speak, on the part of God, for the atonement, instead of one sad reason of necessity on the part of the sinner. And thus it ends in their representing the plan of redemption, with a sort of undefined, abstract, and impersonal generality of statement, as an expedient for meeting an exigency, or getting over a difficulty, in the divine government, harmonising certain opposite claims and considerations, and enabling God to show himself good as well as holy, gracious as well as just; and all this, with a studied avoiding of anything like the precise idea of a strictly real and literal substitution of Christ personally in the stead of the sinner personally; as if, after all, the cross of Calvary were a kind of stroke of policy in heaven's cabinet and heaven's councils, a pageant, a spectacle, an exhibition merely, and not that dread reality which made all hell tremble and all heaven rejoice, as, in the very act of pouring out his soul an offering for sin, the Lord addressed

himself to one of those whose place he was then occupying, whose guilt he was then expiating, whose release he was then purchasing — "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

O my friends, let not your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Others may be careful and troubled about the many reasons that may be found in the principles of God's high government, to explain and account for the atonement; but for you, one reason is all that is needed, — one good reason, — alas! too good, — that you have sinned, that without shedding of blood there is no remission, that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, that the blood of Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Yes! "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

II. As in his own finished work of righteousness and atonement, so in the free offer of the gospel as connected with it, we may see, and seeing, we may bless God for the simplicity that is in Christ. How simple, in every view of it, is the Gospel message! How simple in its freeness. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price" (Isa. 55:1). "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). How near does it bring Christ! "It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. 30:12-14). "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:6-9). How very plain as well as pathetic is the Lord's pleading with sinners! "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). How explicit, how unequivocal, are his assurances! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:32). "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11). "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). How clear, how undeniably palpable and peremptory, as it might seem beyond its being possible for any sophistry to torture it, is the declaration of the Lord's will that all men should be saved and should come to the knowledge of the truth, and his command that all men everywhere should repent.

Yet, need I say to you, my friends, that it is here very especially that Satan puts forth all his subtilty to beguile? You are not ignorant, I am persuaded, of his devices. You know how many reasons for doubt and

unbelief he can contrive to set up against God's one reason for believing. Here am I — a lost sinner. There is Christ, a living Saviour. I am commanded to believe; and if I believe not, I perish. But here is a test. Is there ever any one of all his reasons that is not founded on a perhaps? It was upon a perhaps that he persuaded his poor beguiled victims at first to risk their paradise, their souls, their all; ye shall not surely die! And it is by a perhaps still, or by many a perhaps, that he would beguile poor sinners, to keep them away from Christ. Thus, as to the Father: it may be that you are not elected; that your name may not be in the book of life; or as to the Son: Christ died only for his sheep, and you may not be one of them. Or again as to the Holy Ghost: as you may not be an object of the electing love of the Father, and the saving work of the Son, so you may not be a subject of the converting grace of the Spirit. You may have committed the unpardonable sin; you may have persevered in sin so long as to be beyond the reach of renewal and repentance; you may have offended God beyond the hope of his being ever appeased; or crucified the Son of God afresh, and put yourself out of the range of his sacrifice; or quenched the Spirit beyond hope of any revival: your sin may be so heinous, your backsliding so inexcusable, your hardness of heart so great, that though all other sinners might find mercy, there may be none for you. Or, yet once more, as to the supposed conditions of your being saved: perhaps you are not convinced enough of your sin, or sorry enough for it; or perhaps you are not repenting aright, or not believing aright, or not seeking and praying aright; or you may not be willing enough, or you may not be able enough, or you may not have knowledge enough, or faith enough, or love enough, and so on; with may-bes and perhapses heaped on one another, Satan, playing into your own natural fears and feelings, would keep you hesitating and halting, balancing scruples and weighing doubts for ever.

But it is upon no may-be, upon no perhaps, that the blessed Lord invites you to commit your soul to him. He does not multiply uncertain reasonings and pleadings. He has but one word to you. And that word is true. He has confirmed it by an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." He has sworn by himself, "I, even I, am he." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He has but one voice, the voice of tender entreaty, Turn ye, turn ye. He has but one argument, the argument of the cross, a full atonement made for guilt of deepest dye, an everlasting righteousness brought in, a sufficient satisfaction made to the righteous law, and a welcome, without upbraiding and without reserve, awaiting the very chief of sinners.

O my friends, let no subtilty of Satan ever beguile you, or corrupt your minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, in his gospel offer of a free, a full, a present salvation. And be not careful to answer Satan's manifold subtilty; be content to set over against it the simplicity that is in Christ. Ah! there is nothing Satan likes better than to draw you into argument and debate; he would fain entangle you in his web of sophistry, by getting you to take up and discuss his specious reasonings in detail.

Thou poor soul, scarce escaped out of his net, thou knowest these wiles of the devil. It was in many meshes he tried to involve thee; it was by many ties he tried to bind thee; and while thou wast painfully seeking to unravel each miserable thread, to unloose each small and cunning knot, how did he keep thee fluttering and vainly panting to be free.

And oh! the first glimpse thou didst get of the simplicity that is in Christ! the first apprehension, the first taste, of the free, the simple, the unencumbered Gospel of the grace of God! What a relief! What a release! The scales fell from thine eyes! Like Samson awaking, thou didst tear off from thy limbs ten thousand chains of Satan's lying sophistry, as, with a sovereign pardon in thy hand thou didst walk forth out of thy prison, erect now and bold — in the broad light of God's reconciled countenance. It was then that by a single word of power and peace — "Come unto me" — "It is I" — "Thy sins be forgiven thee," — thy Lord dissipated the entire host of thy spiritual enemies; and the new glad song of liberty he put into your lips was, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth! Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

III. As there is the simplicity of actual reality in the great Atonement, and the simplicity of earnest sincerity in the gospel offer, so in respect also of the completeness of believers as one with Jesus, we may note the simplicity that is in Christ. Here we speak to you in the language of the apostle, as espoused to Christ; presented to him as a chaste virgin to a loving husband; and we would be jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for duplicity now on your part towards him is nothing short of spiritual adultery, and is sadly inconsistent with the simplicity that is in Christ towards you. And what, the apostle adds (ver. 4), would you have? Would you have one to come to you with another Jesus to preach to you, another Spirit for you to receive, another Gospel for you to accept? Are ye so soon weary of the homely fare of the Lord's kingdom that ye would look out for new and foreign dainties? Are your minds corrupted from the simplicity of Christ? Alas! it is to be feared that the serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtilty, has been busy with your minds too. He contrived to make her dissatisfied even with the simplicity of Paradise. Is he making you, in like manner, dissatisfied with the simplicity that is in Christ?

Call to mind here, my friends, the circumstances of our first parents, and the subtilty of Satan in that first temptation that beguiled them. In the garden of Eden they had all things richly to enjoy. Of every tree of the garden they might freely eat. It was a simple grant of all the happiness of which their pure nature was susceptible that was made to them by their bountiful Creator. But the very simplicity of the grant was a stumbling-block to them. The single test of their loyalty, — in itself simple enough too, — became irksome. Satan had a more excellent way. He would improve upon the divine method of Eden's holy joys, and make their position yet more perfect and more free. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It was a subtle snare. Ye are treated now as children; your innocence is the innocence of ignorance, and ignorance, too, is all your bliss. Be knowing; and be as gods.

So the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, causing her to be discontented with the simple profusion of Eden's blessings and the simple tenure on which she held them. And the like spirit of discontent he would fain cherish in you in regard to the simplicity that is in Christ. Of that simplicity you that are in Christ have some experience. It is the simplicity of a rich and royal liberality, alike in his gifts and in his manner of giving. How simple, in every view of it, is his treatment of you, my brethren that are his, — you that are in him. "Ye are complete in him." "All things are yours." All that he has is yours. The perfection of his righteousness, the fulness of his grace and truth, the holiness of his divine nature, the riches of his divine glory, his blessed relation of sonship to the Father, the unction of the Holy Ghost wherewith

he was anointed, the love with which the Father hath loved him, the reward with which the Father hath crowned him, all his possessions, in short, and all the pure elements of his own inmost satisfaction, his rest, his peace, his joy, all, all he shares with you, simply, bountifully, unreservedly; and all upon the simple footing of your only being in him and abiding in him.

What simplicity is this! And yet, my friends, you may be tempted to weary of it. Even Paradise itself began to grow tame and insipid. The even tenor of its peaceful and placid way, the noiseless unbroken current of its smooth waters of delight, was felt to be dull and slow; and its inmates became impatient for a change. They disliked the level uniformity of mere creature innocency, and the humility of prolonged dependence on their most beneficent Creator. They would take a shorter and more summary road to perfection, they would be as gods themselves, knowing good and evil. Is there never anything like this, my friends, in your spiritual experience? Are there never seasons when the whole ordinary routine of your wonted spiritual exercises seems weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable? Is it a time of heaviness with you? of falling away from your first love? of collapse after excitement? of dulness after ecstasy, and listless languor following upon some agitating or exhilarating crisis in your history? Who shall prescribe for such a spiritual malady? What can we say to you that will not fall as a thrice-told tale upon your ear? To tell you again merely of Christ, to rehearse the old story of his sufferings and death, to assure you over and over of the sufficiency of his atonement, the freeness of his gospel, the promise of his Spirit, — to speak to you still of nothing but the efficacy of faith, and the power of prayer, and the consolation of the word, and the lowly duty of simple waiting on the Lord, that he may renew your soul, — all this is but to charm ache with air and agony with words, to patch grief with proverbs. It is all true, you say, incontrovertibly true: you know it all and you believe it all; and yet you feel wretched, and dull, and dead. Is there no more sovereign specific for ministering to a mind diseased? Is there no fresh expedient for reawakening the dormant feelings of the heart? Is there no royal road to a holier and happier state?

Alas! my friends, yours is the very frame of mind for Satan's subtlest policy to work on. To you he comes as an angel of light! proposing some specious novelties in doctrine, refinements upon the commonplace threadbare preaching of the cross; or suggesting new modes of worship or of fellowship, expedients for improving upon the ordinary means of growth in grace and progress in holiness. It is the frame of mind with which heresiarchs of all sorts, whether cold and calculating, or warm and enthusiastic, know well how to deal. Let church history, modern as well as ancient, testify! At such seasons, brethren, be ye especially on your guard! Seek not relief impatiently by devices of your own or of others who may plausibly profess to pity you. Wait on the Lord. Stand on the old paths. Let his word still be your stay; continue in prayer, and faint not. Wait, I say, on the Lord. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Abide still in Christ. Look to him as at the first. Deal with him as a poor, empty soul, with a rich, full, loving Saviour. Go not elsewhere, but only to Christ. All things around you change. All within you changes. But keep on trusting in him. Though he slay me, he is the same. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Let him not kindle a fire of his own, or walk in the sparks men may kindle. Let him still wait on the Lord, who will cause light to arise.

IV. Great and manifest as is the simplicity that is in Christ your Lord, in his work of righteousness and atonement for you, in the free offer of his gospel to you, and in his uniting you to himself, and associating you with himself in all that is his; it is not less apparent in his guidance of you, as your captain and example. I will guide thee, says the Lord to the happy man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is not imputed, and in whose spirit there is no guile, — I will guide thee with mine eye (Ps. 32:8): — a manner of guiding peculiarly and pre-eminently simple. It is opposed to the use of mere brute force, or the mere compulsion of threatening and terror, the bit, the bridle, the uplifted rod, the inflicted stroke, the mere scourge or rein of absolute authority, softened perhaps by coaxing, flattery, and cajoling falsehood. To be guided by the Lord with his eye, — what docility does this imply in you, what simplicity in Christ!

Observe the conditions of such a guidance as this. In all guidance of beings endowed with reason, conscience, and free will, four things are ordinarily indispensable; a rule, a motive, an inward power, an upward or onward pattern. In the case of men naturally, of you in your unconverted state, and out of Christ, what are these? (1.) The rule — the law of course; but it is the law which you feel, if strictly applied, must condemn you, and therefore presume that it must admit of relaxation. (2.) The motive — a mere sense of necessity, a feeling that you must do some homage. (3.) The power in you — your own frail resolution. (4.) The pattern before you — some one of the better sort among yourselves.

But mark the change, when, as pardoned sinners, ransomed criminals, adopted children, you are guided by the Lord with his eye. (1.) As to the rule, it is the law still, but it is not the dead letter, but the living spirit of the law. It is not the law in its condemning form of a covenant of works, bringing you under the sentence of death, and putting you to all subtle shifts to evade it. But it is the law as magnified and made honourable by our righteous and suffering substitute, the law as satisfied, and therefore justifying, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the law of liberty, the law of love. Then (2.) As to the motive, it is not the desperate desire of some sort of partial and precarious accommodation yet to be effected, but the sweet sense of full and perfect reconciliation already freely and graciously secured.

Again (3.) As to the inward moving power, it is the indwelling and inworking of the spirit of Christ. You are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man; Christ dwells in your heart by faith. And (4.) As to the ideal, or model, or example, it is Christ himself. It is a guidance (1) according to the free spirit, and not the mere servile letter of the law; (2) through the motive, not of a servile dread of still impending wrath, but of love to him who has first loved us; (3) by the power of that Spirit abiding in us, who worketh in us, both to will and to do of God's good pleasure; and (4) in the very steps of him who hath left us an example, and to whom we are to look as the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Surely there is great simplicity in such guidance as this. It is throughout the guidance, not of arbitrary force, but of reason and good feeling; not of fear, but of love; not of the flesh, but of the Spirit; not of a miserably inadequate model, but of a perfect pattern; not of the letter, but of the spirit of the law. The simplicity of it lies in its appealing to our highest sense of honour, our most generous and disinterested feelings of gratitude and honour. There is unity, and therefore simplicity, in the reference throughout to the one Lord, for the rule, the motive, the inspiring power, and the animating pattern.

But the subtilty of Satan, how manifold is it, how complicated are his insidious wiles, in this department, especially, of a holy walk, or of right and faithful discharge of practical duty. What a subtle science is casuistry, the science, in a special sense, of Satan, in which he is peculiarly at home. How ingeniously does he multiply his pleas in reference to all the several parts of evangelical holiness, the rule, the reason, the power, the pattern.

(1.) For the rule, — oh it cannot always be the strict unbending morality of the ten commandments. That standard it may be right and necessary generally to maintain, to guard against flagrant Antinomian and licentious abuses. But all men except recluses know that allowances must be made in social life, and regard must be had to circumstances, and within certain limits there must be an accommodation of what God requires to what the world will bear.

Then (2.) the motive of all you do ought doubtless to be not servile fear, but filial love, not the mere dread of being visited with punishment, but the desire to please, and it is plain that this motive has a very large and wide sweep, and might prompt many a generous and even chivalrous service and sacrifice in God's cause, from which the other motive might hold you excused. Still, practically, as things now are, it is a great matter if a Christian mixing with society keep clear of what is positively forbidden, and if nothing palpably wrong can be established against him.

And so also (3.) as to the power, it is admitted vaguely and generally, that you have a promise of divine aid to help your infirmities and strengthen you for the Lord's work and warfare. But this, alas! does not hinder a large measure of the very same apologetic pleading of human frailty by which worldly men are wont to palliate their shortcomings and excesses.

And finally (4.) when we look to the pattern, how aptly does Satan teach us to evade the obligation of a full following of Christ, by suggesting sundry qualifications and limitations, — as that there are many things in which Christ, being divine, must be admitted to be inimitable, — until at last we come to feel practically, either that the imitation of him is a mere fiction, or that we are to fix for ourselves wherein, and to what extent it is to be realised.

O be not corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, as guiding his people with his eye according to the spirit of his own holy law, through the sweet constraining influence of love to himself, by the power of his Spirit abiding in them as in him, and after the high example he has left them that they should follow his steps. Ah! it is a blessed simplicity! It is the eye of Christian love. It is the charm of Christian life. To me to live is Christ: Christ the rule; Christ the motive; Christ the power; Christ the pattern. To live under Christ, for Christ, by Christ, after Christ; to live, yet not I but Christ living in me, — and I living the life I now live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

V. The simplicity that is in Christ may be noted in connection with his second coming and glorious appearing. Here Satan has been expending not a little of his subtilty, throughout all ages of the Church's history, sometimes hiding this great doctrine, or contriving to have it kept in abeyance, and at other times complicating and embarrassing it, mixing up with it a variety of questions, scarcely, if at all, bearing on its real, vital, and practical import.

For, in truth, as to all that is essential and influential, it would seem to be simple enough. The Lord cometh as our Judge. He cometh as our exceeding great reward. We are to appear before his judgment seat; we are to be with him where he is, to see and share his glory. And if we add that his coming for these high ends is to be apprehended by us as both sudden and near at hand, we seem to have the main substance of the believer's very simple, but very glorious and very awful hope.

Thus regarded, it is practically a most influential hope; influential for its very simplicity. It sets you upon working, watching, waiting for the Lord. You work for him as servants, not wicked and slothful, but diligent, as those who must give account to him. You watch for him, with loins girt and lamp burning, — not sleeping as do others, but watching and being sober, as children of the light and of the day, putting off sleep and drunkenness and all works of the night, — putting on the whole armour of light, looking up, looking out, as not knowing at what hour the Master may come. You wait for him. You wait, with what ardent longing! I wait for the Lord. Yea, more than they that watch for the morning. When shall the day dawn and the shadows flee away? Oh, when shall I welcome my returning Saviour? You wait for him with increasing ardour, as your growing likeness to him makes his fellowship more congenial; and sorrows and separations set you more and more upon the anticipation of future reunion in him. You wait, however, still, how patiently! reconciled to every hard duty and every irksome trial by the promise of the Comforter now, and the sure hope of glory at the last. Now to be thus working, watching, waiting for the Lord, how simple and how blessed an attitude! And thus to use for comfort and edification the great doctrine of his coming again, is surely to act according to the simplicity that is in Christ.

Other inquiries there may be, of interest in their place, respecting the times and seasons and events connected with the close of this world's dark history and the ushering in of a better day. But let not such detailed and complicated investigations, which surely after all are to the believer personally of subordinate importance, as well as of uncertain issue, be so blended with the one grand outline of Jesus coming again to receive his people to himself, as to mar the impression of its sublime and majestic unity and simplicity.

This was a warning needed in the early church, as the apostle himself testifies, when some used the doctrine to deceive and perplex; and he found it necessary, that he might prevent plain believers from being shaken in mind and troubled, to give an express and authoritative contradiction to some of the rumours that had been raised and circulated. And no intelligent observer, either of the past or of the present, will deny the necessity of a similar caution now.

I ask you to distinguish here again, and here especially, between the complex and the simple: and I remind you that what really is to produce the right moral and spiritual effect upon your souls is not the crowded canvas and complicated scenery of a picture embracing all the particulars of a world's catastrophe, — no, not that, not that at all, but the one dread and holy image of Jesus, as he was taken up to heaven on Mount Olivet, so coming again, even as he was seen to go! Be that coming when it may, it is still, as the polestar of the Church's hope, and the spur of her zeal, simple, solemn, in its very standing alone, isolated, solitary, separate and apart from all accessories of preceding and accompanying revolutions.

Yes! it is not earthquakes, or tempests, or deluges of fire; it is not falling empires, mighty wars and tumults, convulsions of all sorts over all the earth; it is not Babylon doomed nor Israel restored, nor all the vast upheaving of the social fabric that must attend such vicissitudes — though it well concerns the slumbering nations to give heed to these things, and watchmen in Zion must never cease to ring in the ears of a scoffing world the knell of its approaching dissolution; — still, I say, it is not these, not these altogether, nor any of them, that I have before my eye, filling my whole soul, and heart, and mind, when I turn weeping from the grave of buried friendship, or rise startled from the couch of despondency and sloth — no, but Jesus my Lord, himself alone, the centre of ineffable brightness and beauty. Angels and the redeemed are around him: but it is himself alone that fixes my regard, and I, poor miserable I, a sinner saved by his grace, a servant working for his hire, a watcher waiting for his coming, — I rise, I rush forth, I run to meet — nay, I am caught up to meet — my Lord in the air. So shall I be ever with the Lord.

1. To careless sinners we have a word to say. The subtilty of Satan is very apt to beguile and corrupt; but we have to remind you that there is a simplicity in Satan that is more insidious and disastrous still. There are those whom Satan leads captive at pleasure, and on whom it is really not worth his while to waste or expend his subtilty at all. When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: he has no occasion for the use either of his arts or of his arms. It is when a stronger than he cometh upon him, to overcome him, that he needs to have recourse to the violence of threats or the artifice of alluring wiles. It is for his victims that have escaped, or that are escaping from his grasp, that he reserves the practice of his stratagems: it is they who alas! from personal experience, are not ignorant of his devices. With you, who are going on contentedly in the broad road, he uses no refinement: to you his lies are simple enough; nay he scarcely needs more than one; his old lie with which he began, “ye shall not surely die.” Ah! it may well be that all our discussions of nice and intricate points of conscience are unintelligible to you. You have little sympathy with the strange varieties of frame and feeling that attend a spiritual awakening, and you cannot comprehend the turns and windings of a poor soul, hunted as the wounded hart in the desert, and panting for the water brooks. How it should be so very difficult to assuage the anguish of a guilty conscience, or to pacify the fears of a broken heart, or to get a sinner to believe in the forgiveness of sins, or to make him continue to rely on the mercy of heaven, you cannot understand at all; it seems all to you so simple, easy, natural; so much almost a matter of course; that you should be let alone now and let off somehow at the last. But I beseech you rather to look to the simplicity that is in Christ than to lean on the simplicity that is in Satan. The simplicity that is in Satan! Truly simple enough are they that believe his fond and simple lie! But hear another voice, simple enough too: “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” And hear another voice, yet the same, simple enough too! and awful! — awful for its simplicity. “Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me! “” Seek ye the Lord while he may be found! Call ye upon him while he is near!”

2. To anxious souls I would say. Let not the subtilty of Satan distress you beyond measure. And above all, let it not surprise you! Count it not strange that you fall into divers temptations! When you are thus tempted, do not yield to the crowning temptation of imagining that your case is strange and your experience singular. This is a great snare. It ministers to a certain feeling of half-unconscious self-complacency, as you brood over difficulties and doubts and embarrassments; fancying that never was there soul-exercise, never soul-distress, like yours. Be sure that there hath no temptation befallen you but such as common to men. And remember your way of escape is not the way of combating in argument the subtilty of Satan; but the common, far safer and simpler way of simply acquiescing anew, and ever anew, in the simplicity of Christ! For you are no match in special pleading for the Master of that science! The question of your peace with God, and your comfortable walk with him, is one that never will be solved or settled beforehand by any processes of subtle reasoning. You must solve and settle it experimentally. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Venture your soul upon the simplicity that is in Christ, his simple faithfulness, the simplicity of his promise, — "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Let Satan perplex the question as he may. Let him conjure up doubtful disputations by the score, — by the hundred. Let him summon a very legion of dark surmises to disconcert you! Be you simple. Be you decided. Linger not. Hesitate not. Do to God, — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, — the justice you would be ashamed to deny to an earthly friend. Simply believe that the Father means what he says when he beseeches you to be reconciled to him in his Son; that the Son means what he says when he cries, "Come unto me, ye weary; "that the Holy Ghost means what he says when, together with the Bride, he says, "Come, take of the water of life freely!"

3. To you who believe I would say, — Let there be simplicity in you corresponding to the simplicity that is in Christ. In all simplicity, accept Christ as your substitute! In all simplicity, comply with his call to come to him, and through him, to the Father! In all simplicity, abide in him and be satisfied with his fulness! In all simplicity, yield yourselves to his gracious and loving guidance! In all simplicity, be ever looking out for his glorious coming! All on his part, — in his treatment of you, in his offering himself for you; in his giving himself to you; in his keeping you and making you complete in himself; in his guiding you with his eye; in his coming again to receive you to himself, that where he is you may be also; — all is simple, free, generous, unreserved! There is no keeping back of anything. He opens his heart, his hand, to you? Let all on your part, in your treatment of him, be simple too! Be upon honour with him! Be guileless, frank, cordial, in your reliance with him; your submission to him; your working and waiting for him! So will you taste the blessedness of fully realising the simplicity that is in Christ. Yours will be the enlargement of heart that, springing out of a simple faith in Christ, takes in all the fulness of his glorious gospel. Yours will be the alacrity, and cheerfulness, and joy of running with heart enlarged in the way of the divine commandments, and walking freely as well as humbly with your God. Your path will be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. All embarrassment, all constraint, all reserve, being at an end; your fellowship in the Spirit is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.