

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN.

THE world stands forward as Christ's open foe. It wages an incessant war against pure truth. Is it not, then, a traitor's part to hold close converse with the adverse camp? Is it not shame, and worse than shame, to take familiar counsel with a rebel host? He cannot raise the banner of the cross, or march to victory by Jesus' side, who wavers between hostile ranks. Love cries again, "Come out"—"Be separate." The true believer glories in his Lord. In every company, act, and step, he is to show the livery of his King. It is false witness to adopt the language of an alien race. It is desertion of the holy service to take the garb of a strange household. Can Moses live as an Egyptian prince? He chooses hardships that he may testify allegiance to the cause of God. "We are the salt of the earth." But mixed with filth the salt will lose its savour.

All usefulness is slain when Christ is left. It is a common sneer that saintliness is a mere pretence, and faith is but hypocrisy's disguise. Suspicion fastens on the wavering steps. The world, with all its blindness, quickly reads the language of the life. It slowly credits a consistent saint. But soon, how soon, it derides inconsistent walk! In such cases zeal is a pointless arrow and a broken bow. No argument, no eloquence, no diligence prevails. Words which seem insincere touch not the heart. No teacher really teaches with a doubtful fame. Therefore Jesus says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Believer, ponder well these obvious thoughts. Would you know peace as an unfailing stream? Would you pluck joys from ever-verdant boughs? Would you from morn till night bask in the sunshine of Christ's smile? Would you have happy consciousness that every step is an ascent towards heaven? Would you be cheered with the sweet hope that life is not a barren field or summer brook? Would you pour comfort into many hearts, and wear at last a diadem of saved souls? If such be your desires, avoid the poison of the world. If you tread down the barrier line, if you stray out beyond the fold's wide fence, you wrong your soul; you bring reproach upon the Lord; your days will be uncertain sound; your memory will be no instructive page. Cling to the confines of the cross. There is no blessedness without.

The distinction between clean and unclean meats did more than cause the Jews to dwell alone. It forced unceasing vigilance. It placed them in the tower of constant circumspection. It always whispered in their ears, Beware. Their eyes could scarcely look around without the thought of God's dividing line. Each object of their touch was "Clean or Unclean."

The lesson is most obvious. We thus are taught at every step to ask God's will; at every moment to inquire, Is this a lawful path? It is a grievous error to suppose that each minutest matter is not the seed of some results. The circumstance of every moment affects the soul, and so affects the endless state. The stamp, "Clean or Unclean," belongs to every movement of each mind, to every act throughout each

day. Reader, learn hence to cultivate a watchful course. Apply a constant test.

No ground is neutral. We always stand in the right or in the wrong path. Hence the inquiry should often sift the soul, "What doest thou here?" Is "Clean or Unclean" God's judgment of this place? This line, when drawn by Scripture rule, would sweep God's children from many a contaminating spot.

No book is so insipid as to have no character, and leave no tinge. How many trifling offsprings of the worldly pen would find an early and unknown grave if the inquiry, "Clean or Unclean" were solemnly applied. Let, then, the truth be settled in each mind, that there is no indifferency on earth. Each moment flies on high recording, "Clean or Unclean" concerning life's employ.

Reader, another thought demands reply. Your soul, your precious soul, your never-dying soul, Is it "Clean or Unclean?" By nature it is the vilest filth. All Adam's race flow forth as unclean waters from an unclean spring. But are you cleansed? Do you live washed in a Saviour's blood? Are you the temple of His purifying Spirit? Jesus can cleanse from every sin, and He alone. Cleave then to Him. The Spirit sanctifies, and He alone. Seek His indwelling. Now is the only cleansing day. The door will soon be closed. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

IT IS THE LORD!

LOVE is the best learner, and sees quickest. Love had drawn John to lean upon the bosom of Jesus, and there had gained for him that intimate acquaintance which made future recognition instinctive. As soon as the miraculous blessing appeared, his first upspringing thought was, "It is the Lord!"

So will it be with us if we love with the love of John. If we experience for ourselves or for our children some unusual bounty, increase of health, knowledge, reputation, influence or wealth—any marked success in a legitimate calling—even before we fully realise our enjoyment, the recognition, sanctifying all, will overspread the heart, "It is the Lord!"

Nor need the blessing be either sudden or of overwhelming magnitude. We are as sure that the sun is the cause of the morning dawn as of the mid-day splendour; and the father of the family is as sincere when in the morning he returns thanks for protection and refreshing slumber during the night as when with stronger emotion he calls upon the assembled household to praise God for signal deliverance from threatened calamity.

In the freshness of the early morning, the singing bird, perched on the topmost limb of the tree, turns his breast to the sun, and the music of his song gushes forth spontaneously.

The Christian sings, too, when, with his face turned to Jesus, his heart warm with the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness, he receives a blessing and says, "It is the Lord!"