

may try to forget it in pleasure, we may hide it away beneath ledgers and cash-books, we may think we can avoid answering it by a mere formal profession of Christianity, we may put it away from us altogether and say, What have I to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? But this is a question which will not be silenced, which refuses to be shaken off, which comes again and again to meet us to press for an answer. We hear it sounding from out the life of every good man we meet, it rings in our ears at every Eucharist, it meets us in every call to self-sacrifice, it demands a decision in every moment of temptation. Living or dying, we can by no means escape from this personal, practical, persistent question: "What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?"

Once more, this is surely pre-eminently a question for Christmas Day. We are inevitably brought face to face with it as we meet together to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus Christ. Faith linked to imagination carries us away to Bethlehem this morning, and to the eye of each believing soul the walls of this church are transformed into the rough timbers of a stable, and the altar is changed into a manger stall. When in a few moments the Words of Consecration are spoken, the Infant Saviour, wrapped in the swaddling-clothes of the Sacramental Species, will stretch forth His tiny hands to us, demanding our worship, claiming our discipleship, pleading for our love. Let us think for a few moments of these Christian claims of Christ, that we may be ready each one of us to give a right answer to the question of the text, What shall I do with Jesus?

### I.

First, then, from His Manger Throne, Christ Jesus claims our worship. It is no mere saint, or teacher, or martyr, or benefactor of the human race, whose birth we celebrate to-day. Christmas Day is the birthday of God made man; the little baby wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger is none other than God over all, blessed for ever more. We need always to remember that Christ gave us a revelation of God not only by His words but by His actions, not merely or mainly by what He said, but by what He was and did. He not only told us about God: He was God in human form. The Word, says St. John, was made Flesh. What word? Why, the greatest word in human language, the word God. I can understand something of the meaning of that great word now; Bethlehem and Galilee, Calvary and Olivet, have made it wonderfully plain. As Tenyson says:—  
And so the Word had breath, and wrought

With human hands the Creed of Creeds,

In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More than all poetic thought.

That is the great glory of the Incarnation. It shows us God; it expresses His character in the terms of a human life. When we wonder what God would do, we have only to inquire what Jesus did. When we puzzle our brains with abstruse metaphysical speculations as to the nature of the Deity, a voice says to us, You will never make much progress that way, but you can see God in Jesus Christ. Look at Jesus, study His life, bathe your soul in the white radiance of his perfect character, and you will know what God is like. For he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father.

Yes, Jesus is God; that is the foundation truth of the Christian Faith. And because He is God, He demands our worship and will be satisfied with nothing less. Do not insult Christ by offering Him your admiration; He will have none of it. You can admire man, but you cannot admire God. With Him it must be worship or nothing; there is no possible alternative that He will accept. What, then, shall we do with Jesus that is called Christ, on this His Birthday? Shall we worship Him? I trow we shall. Before ever we think of ourselves this morning, of the tremendous, the unspeakable difference the Incarnation has made for us; before ever we ask, for ourselves and for others, those Christmas blessings which the Saviour is so ready, so anxious to bestow upon us—it will be our pride, our joy, our delight to bow down with the shepherds in profoundest homage and adoration before the Manger Throne of the Incarnate Christ, and to join with the Universal Church in earth and heaven in her great Christmas Anthem of praise and worship: We praise Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only O Christ with the Holy Ghost art most high in the glory of God the Father.

### II.

Secondly, Jesus Christ claims our discipleship. Perfect God, He is also perfect Man, the mirror in which we can see what human life can be and ought to be. If as God I must worship Him, as man I must take Him as my pattern, and, especially on Christmas Day, I must try to follow the example of His great humility. The crib is the symbol of the lowliness of Jesus; the humble circumstances of His birth translate the self-abasement involved in the Incarnation into terms which we can understand—

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him  
Nor earth sustain,  
Heaven and earth shall flee away,  
When He comes to reign.  
In the bleak mid-winter  
A stable-place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty,  
Jesus Christ.

Our Lord once told us to go and sit down in the lowest room; at Bethlehem He practised what he taught. He once warned us that except we become as little children we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Surely He had the right to say it, Who Himself became a little child. Oh! if you would realise the humility of God, look at the last little helpless infant born into the world, and think that such was once the Lord Jesus Christ. From His lowly cradle, the Babe of Bethlehem preaches to us the beauty of humility, and reminds us that before we can hope to be with Him in His glory, we must become, in heart and spirit, little children too.

Is not that a lesson we all of us need to learn? Pride is the parent stem on which all the other deadly sins are grafted; and pride is in all of us, in the poor as well as in the rich, in the young as much as in the old, manifesting its presence in an almost infinite variety of ways. How promptly we respond to flattery, how delighted we are if people speak well of us, how bitterly we resent it if we are slighted or rebuked, how quick we are to take offence, how envious of others, how eager to belittle them. We find it almost impossible to admit that we are ever in the wrong; we think so much of our own opinion, and are wounded if others do not take our advice. We despise common-place tasks, we do our good deeds to be seen of men, we are so easily fascinated, poor creatures that we are, by titles, and wealth, and position and success. So universal is pride, so congenial to our human weakness, so terribly difficult to overcome. And surely this is the reason why the earthly life of Jesus begins in the Manger. He suffered Himself to be laid in that lowly crib, that He might woo us to the practice of humility by His own most beautiful example. As we think of His hands stretched out to Mary in imploring dependence, of His voice crying with cold in the manger stall, how poor, how mean, how worthless, how infinitely petty and degraded seem our conceit, our vanity, our self-satisfaction. Believe it, it will mean a real step forward on our path Heavenward if we earnestly resolve this Christmas morning that so often as we are tempted to plume ourselves in our talents, our position, our achievements, our success, we will pay a visit in spirit to the Manger, and gazing at the Eternal Son of the Father, born in poverty and naked-