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EDITORIAL NOTE

With this number of the JOURNAL the Presbyterian Historical Society returns to its former policy of issuing the magazine four instead of two times a year. It is gratifying to be able to announce that the funds of the Society permit this enlarged amount of publication. The Committee in charge of the JOURNAL hopes that Dr. Finney, when his restored health will enable him to resume his duties as General Secretary, will organize and conduct a new department of the magazine which, we feel confident, will add to the usefulness and interest of this publication.

The Editor takes this occasion to state that he will welcome communications pertaining to this phase of the Society's work, especially suitable contributions to serve as major articles or briefer notes. Addresses and sermons on anniversary occasions often contain important historical facts which may appropriately be recorded in these pages, and accounts of the early history of some of our older churches are specially worth preserving and publishing in this magazine.

EARLY AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM *

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I deeply appreciate the honor and privilege of taking part in this noteworthy celebration. I congratulate this venerable parish, and indeed our whole Church, on the prospect which these coming days afford us of securing a fuller knowledge and a more adequate appreciation of the life and work of William Tennent, that pioneer of religious education in this country who made this spot the very cradle of our American Presbyterianism.

"History," it has been said, "is the handmaid of Providence, the priestess of truth, and the mother of wisdom." And if our indebtedness to the past is at all times a profitable theme for meditation, surely there are few shrines in this land of ours at which one can more easily or more delightfully put himself under the inspiration and the sanctity of the great communion of the faithful of bygone days, and realize the charm and value of that heritage of Christian toil and aspiration which the same benign Providence that nurtured our Church and our nation in their infancy has bequeathed to us and still preserves for us as our most cherished spiritual possession. As President Benjamin Harrison said on the occasion of the celebration of this same event in 1889: "On this spot, about which there are gathered so many historical associations . . . I stand awed before the thought of what the great day will reveal as the fruit of this modest but pious and courageous effort. . . . Only the eye of God can follow these tender and imperceptible filaments of mental and moral influence that touch our lives."

In accepting the invitation to speak to you at this time, I have not been unmindful of the fact that the committee having

* An address delivered in the Neshaminy Warwick Church, Hartsville, Pa., Sunday, October 2, 1927, at the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Log College. For the complete programme of the celebration see pp. 42-45.

in charge the programme for these festive days has arranged for a number of addresses that will deal in detail with the various aspects of the ministry and influence of the man to whose memory we are met to pay our grateful tributes. Under these circumstances, I have thought that I might best meet the proprieties of this hour if, as the first speaker of the series, I should devote my allotted time to a presentation of the general historic setting of the event we celebrate. With your kind indulgence, therefore, I shall undertake a brief survey of early American Presbyterianism and a summary estimate of its salient characteristics.

I

It may be well at the outset to emphasize the familiar but highly significant fact that the sources from which our denomination derived its original elements were exceedingly varied. In this respect our Church is like the Republic itself, of which it forms a part and to whose development and prosperity it has made such large and important contributions. On these shores the oppressed from many lands found a refuge. Settled here, these diverse nationalities, under the influence of common institutions, common interests, and a common destiny, gradually became assimilated to a single dominant type of political life and civil government. In like manner, the manifold varieties of Presbyterianism have become blended into a type peculiar to itself. England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, and Germany all contributed to the common stock, but their distinctive ecclesiastical traits have long since become merged into one fairly homogeneous whole, in that branch of Zion to which we are proud to belong—the largest and most influential Presbyterian Church in the world. The work of the Log College as a unifying and consolidating force in our colonial life is an outstanding fact that can be properly appreciated only as we review the scattered elements of Presbyterianism that existed in this country long before the beginning of the eighteenth century. Thus the Puritan colonies of New England contained important features of our polity as well as of our confessional beliefs. The historian

Dexter describes their church order as "a Congregationalized Presbyterianism or a Presbyterianized Congregationalism." To be sure, the distinctively Presbyterian traits finally yielded, in Maine and Massachusetts, even in spite of the influence of large groups of Ulster Scots, to the prevailing standing order of the Congregationalists; but we need to remember not only that their Calvinistic theology and their Calvinistic principles of representative government in Church and State persisted with unabated force well down through the colonial period, but also that when these Puritans migrated westward to the Connecticut, the Hudson, and the Delaware Rivers, they commonly cast in their lot with the Presbyterians. In the New Netherlands, the Dutch settlers brought with them their devotion to the Canons of Dort and the Classis of Amsterdam, which long continued to be the center of their ecclesiastical organization. Early in the eighteenth century, thousands of Germans, fleeing from the cruel devastations of the Palatinate by Louis XIV, crossed the sea and, settling in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, laid the foundations of the German Reformed Church. And French Huguenots, after the terrible oppressions in their native land when the Edict of Nantes was revoked, transferred to New York and especially to South Carolina that enthusiasm for Calvinism and that skill and thrift in industry that had brought France to its highest pitch of prosperity and was then to make their abode in the New World blossom like the rose. And before the seventeenth century closed, the Scottish people of the north of Ireland had begun those migrations which presently reached the proportions of a national exodus, and were destined in the Middle and Southern Colonies to prove so decisive a factor in our political, social, and ecclesiastical history. The taproot of our denominational life is to be found in Maryland and Virginia. English and Scotch had here been the pioneers. But the father of organized American Presbyterianism was Francis Makemie, of the Irish Presbytery of Laggan. Though not a man of genius, he was pious, courageous, energetic, and well fitted by his good judgment and his executive ability to be a leader in what his practical churchmanship discerned as

a growing necessity of the times—the more effective organization of the scattered Presbyterian congregations. A zealous evangelist, he fulfilled a noble apostolate along the seaboard from Massachusetts to the Carolinas, and the church of Rehoboth, in Maryland, one of the many he founded in that colony, has the honor of being the oldest in point of continuous organic connection with our denomination. The first Presbytery, familiarly known as the Presbytery of Philadelphia from its customary place of meeting, was established in 1706, with Makemie as the moderator. It consisted of only seven ministers, all save one being foreign-born, and all but two having been ordained in Scotland or Ireland. But the infant Church grew with considerable rapidity, and if it did not include all of the Presbyterian elements in the colonies, it quickly assimilated many of them. Above all, its growth was due to the Ulster immigration, and in 1716 the Presbytery resolved itself into a Synod with four presbyteries, Philadelphia, New Castle, Snow Hill, and Long Island, there being then seventeen ministers, about forty churches, and about three thousand communicants. For over seventy years—that is, down to the organization of our General Assembly in 1789—this Synod was the supreme judicatory of our Church.

Among the outstanding facts in the history of the Church as thus organized is the event we are now celebrating—the establishment of the Log College by William Tennent. The authentic data in regard to his early life are few. Born in Ireland, probably in 1673, he received his education at the University of Edinburgh, and became a clergyman of the established Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland. He married Catherine Kennedy, the gifted daughter of an eminent Presbyterian minister. In 1716 he emigrated, with his wife and their four sons, to America. In September, 1718, possibly under her influence, he renounced the prelatic forms of government and worship, and was admitted without reordination to the Synod. For some years—his movements are not altogether clear—he labored in Eastern New York, and then at yonder Bensalem. It was probably in the fall of 1726 that he established himself here on the Neshaminy, and in 1727

that the first house of worship arose in this community, and the celebrated academy, nicknamed by its enemies the Log College, entered upon its epoch-making career as a training school for the ministry. To him, as the historian Webster reminds us, more than to any other one man, was due the expansion and prosperity of the Presbyterian Church. All his four sons, Gilbert, William, John, and Charles, followed in his footsteps, the first ranking next to Whitefield himself as a winner of souls during the Great Awakening. After a decade, a goodly number of graduates were at work, as evangelists and pastors, men of marked ability in the pulpit and of such ardent piety that the Awakening became the greatest religious influence in the history of the colonies. Worthy of special mention alongside of the Tennents are Samuel and John Blair, Samuel Finley, John Rowland, William Robinson, Charles Beatty, and James McCrea, while many less well known ministers, educated at the Log College or some of the many schools that were patterned after it, spread the fire of the revival through all these regions. Suffice it here to say that the work of the College amply justified the epitaph on yonder tombstone of the elder Tennent: *Struxit melius quam scivit* ("He built better than he knew").

In 1729 the Synod passed the so-called Adopting Act, whereby the Church was officially pledged to the Westminster Standards and made from that day to this a distinctively confessional Church. Reference has already been made to the Great Awakening, that profound spiritual movement which quickened the evangelistic zeal of the whole Protestant Church and in turn inaugurated its educational and missionary work upon an enlarged basis. Unfortunately, the treasures of truth and grace were borne in earthen vessels, and the "hot gospellers," as the New Side came to be called, frequently interfered with the regular work of the settled pastors, and regarded all want of sympathy with their methods as a proof of spiritual deadness. The result was the first notable schism in our denominational life. The Old Side, led by Robert Cross, and having its strength in Philadelphia and the vicinity, issued a protest against what they deemed the anti-presbyterial and

divisive methods of their opponents. They also repudiated the work of the Log College as being inadequate for the training of ministers for the Church. The schism lasted from 1741 to 1758, when the two Synods reunited upon the basis of the common standards.

Such, in broad outline, were the facts in the development of our Church immediately before and after the organization of our first theological school, and the dawn of the Great Awakening, which that school so nobly, and on the whole so beneficently, promoted, and which in turn became the chief unifying influence in the religious and political life of our country. As we review the progress of our beloved Church, we cannot but feel that God had a sublime purpose in the disposition of these events. As the historian Thomas Murphy has summed them up, the stages of the process were these: (1) the gathering together of a people who had been specially prepared by the fires of persecution in the Old World; (2) their training in, and loyalty to, a sound Calvinistic faith; (3) the erecting of the Log College as a theological school to meet the need of the age for a native, well-educated ministry; (4) the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit in the Great Awakening for the deepening of the piety and the quickening of the missionary and educational work of the whole Church; (5) the sending forth of a band of apostolic men—the graduates of the Log College and its filial institutions—to disseminate the Gospel over the whole world; (6) the annealing and purifying process of the schism of 1741-1748; (7) and finally, the crowning event, the organization of our national government and of our first General Assembly at the same time and in the same place, by men trained in the same schools and in the same principles, so that the year 1789, which witnessed the inauguration of President Washington, witnessed also the inauguration of the first General Assembly.

II

With these general facts in mind, let us now examine more closely the salient characteristics of the Log College men and their contribution to the history of our Church.

1. We shall do these men no more than justice, and we shall do them no slight honor, if we emphasize, first of all, their implicit faith in the Bible as the Word of God and their loyalty to the Reformed Church and its doctrines.

In common with the ministers of the other Churches of the Reformation, they accepted the dictum of Chillingworth: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." But not all Protestants, either in the Old World or in the New, were equally energetic and thorough in their insistence on the authority of the Scriptures. In Lutheranism, for example, the subjective tendency, originating in Luther himself, early led to a rationalism which exalted the Christian consciousness to a place of honor alongside of the Bible as a norm for faith. And as for Anglicanism, its emphasis on the Church and her sacraments, was almost as strong as that which it put upon the written Word. In contrast with these types of Protestantism, the Log College men, no less than their English and Scotch forerunners, rested solely on the inspired record of revealed truth. Doubtless, if a single criticism may be allowed in a purely historical address, these Presbyterians were sometimes too eager to find in the Bible proofs for doctrines which they cherished with a traditional veneration, instead of going to the Bible to learn at first hand what their doctrines ought to be. But we cannot fail to honor them for their fidelity to those great truths of the sovereignty of God, the trustworthiness and sufficiency of Holy Writ, justification by faith alone, the Deity of Christ, his vicarious death as a satisfaction to the divine justice, and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification—those profound views of sin and grace to which Augustine gave classic expression in his immortal *Confessions* and his *City of God*, which Anselm proclaimed in his epochal treatise on the atonement, *Cur Deus Homo?*, which Wyclif, Hus, and the German mystics quickened into newness of life at the close of the Middle Ages, and which the Reformers, above all their ablest theological spokesman, John Calvin, made the chief creative and directive force in the religious thought and activity of the modern world.

And it is worthy of special mention that the Log College men

and their spiritual descendants brought the basal principles of the Calvinistic polity to new honor and victory in our colonial history: the absolute independence of the Church in her own spiritual domain; the parity of the clergy as against every hierarchy, whether papal or prelatic; the rights of the people through their lay representatives, the elders, to share in the government of the Church; and the necessity of strict discipline for all members of the body ecclesiastic. We do well to remember that in the same year in which the Westminster Standards were adopted—1729—the Synod took action explicitly denying the authority of the State over the Church in purely spiritual matters, and the power of the civil magistrate to persecute any for their religion—the first declaration made by any organized Church in America in behalf of the freedom of the Church from secular control. And by their determined and inflexible loyalty to the principle of lay representation in the government of the Church, our venerated fathers, trained in the Log College and its many successors, exerted an influence which has made virtually all our Protestant bodies presbyterian, not indeed in name, but in substance and in reality.

And what shall we say of the type of life which their Calvinism produced? We have no inclination to deny that at times the church discipline, especially with respect to amusements and things now left free to the individual conscience, was unduly Puritanic. But no respectable critic of early American Christianity has been able to deny that then, as always, Calvinism made strong men and noble women, able to do and to bear, to struggle and to overcome, and to sacrifice self in the interest of great ideals of character and duty. As Henry Ward Beecher, hardly a friendly judge, declared: "There is no system which equals Calvinism in intensifying to the last degree ideas of moral excellence and purity of character." Need we add that its golden ages have always been marked by victorious struggles for the dignity and the rights of man? If at times it has seemed cold and passionless, it has nevertheless entered vitally into the lives of the multitudes who have accepted it, enlarging their conceptions, strengthening

their morals, elevating their purposes, and giving firmness to the individual and public conscience. If it has been indifferent or even unduly hostile to liturgical forms of worship and in general to the sensuous arts, like painting and sculpture, it has ennobled and glorified the more intellectual and spiritual arts, poetry, music, and oratory. Emphasizing the privilege that every believer has of coming into immediate fellowship with God, without the aid of any human priesthood, it wrought out a programme of life whose pervading quality was spirituality. Wordsworth's praise of the humble cottage life of Presbyterian Scotland might with equal propriety be given to the average Presbyterian home in the days of our Great Awakening:

A virtuous household, though exceeding poor!
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,
And fearing God—the very children taught
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word
And an habitual piety, maintained
With strictness scarcely known on English soil.

2. In the second place, the Log College men were noted for their evangelistic and missionary zeal.

By this we intend no invidious comparison as between the New Side, on the one hand, and the Old Side on the other, or even as between the Presbyterians as a whole in contrast with earnest and devoted ministers of those days who belonged to other communions. Nearly all of the Churches of the period, be it said to their honor, recognized their duty of bringing the Gospel to the unsaved, including even the destitute Indians. They all realized that there was still much land in this broad vineyard of the Lord that was waiting to be possessed. But it remains the fact that these regions about us here, whether under the ancient Presbytery of Abington, or under the later Presbytery of New Brunswick, were in the Providence of God the most fertile fields for the Great Awakening. That movement had its origin not, as is commonly supposed, in New England, though there Jonathan Edwards was its great leader and its most influential literary representative, but at Raritan, N. J.,

under Domine Frelinghuysen, himself a product of German pietism in Holland, and under Gilbert Tennent, whom Frelinghuysen led to adopt a more fervent and quickening method of preaching, first in New Brunswick, and then in the Second Church of Philadelphia. John and William Tennent, at Freehold, and Charles, at New Castle; John and Samuel Blair, in the Middle and Southern Colonies; the Brainerds, in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; John Rowland, at Amwell, Hopewell, and Lawrenceville; Charles Beatty, in this neighborhood and in Virginia and North Carolina; and, above all, William Robinson and Samuel Davies carried the spirit of this school of the prophets along the whole frontier of our colonial civilization. In 1755 the New Side Synod of New York established the famous Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia, a typical mission station stretching all the way from Western Pennsylvania to Georgia. Within its bounds, prior to its organization, Samuel Davies labored with apostolic fidelity and success as the founder of churches, the champion of freedom, and the friend of learning, until he was called to the presidency of the newly established College of New Jersey. In a word, as no scheme of colonization in the annals of the race ever equalled in magnitude that carried on by our thirteen original colonies in the lands lying to the westward and reaching to the Pacific seaboard, so there have been no home mission fields which in extent of territory or in their historical significance have surpassed those which the ministers of the Presbyterian Synod made their immediate concern. The day of foreign missions on a world-wide scale had not yet dawned, but the Evangelical Revival in England and the contemporary Great Awakening on this side of the sea, which were the divinely appointed preparation of the Church for this great enterprise, had no abler or more devoted promoters than those who received their inspiration and their training in the Log College and the schools that sprang from it and embodied its evangelistic and missionary spirit.

3. I observe, in the third place, that the Log College men and their successors were conspicuous examples of patriotism.

In this respect, too, they were only true to their historic

Calvinistic principles. For, as Lecky testifies: "The Scotch Kirk was by its constitution essentially republican." And Von Ranke declares: "We may consider Calvin the founder of the free states of North America." And our own Bancroft, analyzing the genius of political Calvinism, says that the doctrine of the Genevan Reformer "lifted the individual above pope and prelate, and priest and presbyter; above Catholic Church, and national church, and general synod, above indulgences, remissions, and absolutions from fellow mortals, and brought him into immediate dependence upon God." Here, then, was the logic that made kings tremble on their thrones, and wrested human freedom from the grasp of the oppressor: the fear of God drove from the heart all other fear and brought men before the face of the Eternal upon one and the same plane of their inalienable rights and privileges. Of the total population in the colonies, amounting to about three millions on the eve of the Revolution, about nine hundred thousand were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, about six hundred thousand were New England Puritans, and about four hundred thousand were German, Dutch and French Calvinists. The Quakers were largely non-combatants; the Episcopalians generally favored the crown; and the Methodists followed Wesley in their denunciation of the revolt of the colonies. But the Congregationalists in the East and the Presbyterians from Long Island to Georgia did all they could to promote the patriotic cause. The words of Dr. Inglis, the Tory rector of Trinity Church, New York, often as they have been quoted, deserve repetition whenever we think of the part our Church has played in helping to achieve our independence and the establishment of a national government: "I do not know a Presbyterian minister, nor have I been able, after strict inquiry, to hear of any, who did not by preaching and every effort in his power promote all the measures of the Colonial Congress, however extravagant." The good rector indeed missed the mark, but really only by a hair's breadth, for there were two Presbyterian ministers who sided with the Tories; but if the whole truth is to be told, we must add that of these two, one was deposed and the other was suspended. The Presbyterians were

well fitted to make this noble contribution to the welfare of this land; not only because they never forgot what their ancestors had suffered in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe at the hands of the oppressor, but also because from the very beginning they were socially and geographically a national Church, not confining themselves chiefly to a single section, as did the Puritans in New England, the Dutch in New York, and the Episcopalians in the South, but spreading themselves over many colonies along the seaboard, and everywhere promoting the sense of a national oneness among the people and the influences that led to the establishment of a central government. This is best illustrated by the history of Princeton College, the outgrowth and heir of Tennent's academy. For whereas our three oldest universities, Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale, were each the institution of a single colony, and each the creation of an established Church, Princeton was the child of a voluntary religious communion which had its home, not in one, but in many colonies—the first free university in what is now the United States, and also the first university in this country which began its career as the college of more than one colony. It is no mere accident that the author of the Mecklenburg Resolves was a graduate of Nassau Hall, and that as Bancroft says: "The first voice raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came, not from the Puritans of New England, or the Dutch of New York, or the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians." Could I take the time to call the roll of the Log College men and those whom they influenced to share their love of freedom, we would hear the names of some of the foremost champions of our civil and religious liberties.

4. In the fourth place, the men of the Log College were devoted to the cause of liberal education.

I need not, nor shall I, dwell upon this trait. The occasion that brings us together is the sufficient reminder of the fact. They believed in the necessity and the wisdom of having the official teachers of the Church well trained for their high calling. No doubt, as compared with the curriculum of a modern university, the instruc-

tion in the Log College and the schools that made it their model was quite limited. But as a distinguished educator of our day is wont to remind us, the really important question in sound pedagogy is not how many studies does a youth take, but rather how much study does he accomplish. And as regards the essentials of an adequate preparation for the Gospel ministry, I have no doubt that the training in the liberal arts, the old-fashioned humanities as we call them, given in the Log College, was in many respects better adjusted to the needs of the preacher of that day, than the heterogeneous and disconnected electives on the bargain counter of what we may call the department store type of many a modern university, are suited to the requirements of the minister of to-day. Let it suffice to remember that the fathers took their stand upon the solid and safe foundation that in the long run piety without learning is about as injurious as learning without piety. They believed that the college and the Church have common interests, and that neither without the other can accomplish its best results. Poor as they were, they gave of their poverty to build common schools and higher institutions of learning; and there are few chapters in the history of the kingdom of God on earth that are more inspiring than that which records the erection of that long list of colleges inscribed on yonder monument to the founder of the Log College—those noble institutions that have given a new lustre to his Christian faith, his zeal for education, and his disinterested devotion to the welfare of man and the glory of God. As we contemplate the manifold and noble fruitage that has sprung from the little seed planted here at Neshaminy, let us humbly choose with him to have the ark and covenant of God safe within the rude wooden logs, rather than to contribute to an unsanctified and rationalistic scholarship that boasts its college halls of marble, but has no real appreciation of the sacred treasures enshrined in the temple of revealed truth. Whatever adjustments in our intellectual life the ever-expanding field of scientific knowledge may require us to make, may our colleges continue true to the faith of our great pioneer as amid poverty and obscurity, but with humble trust in the God of all truth and grace, he

built his school for the cause of pure religion, sound learning, and wholesome morals.

5. As a fifth and last characteristic of the Log College men I would name their truly catholic spirit.

Of course, these early Presbyterians, as we have seen, had their dissensions and their schisms. They, too, illustrate what some one has said is true of all Presbyterians: they are like hickory—made of firm, tough fiber, but easily split. But that first division was healed in less than two decades, and the lessons it taught were not soon forgotten. Even Gilbert Tennent, that fiery and sometimes bitter and censorious controversialist, was sobered and mellowed by the responsibilities of his large pastorate in Philadelphia; this son of thunder was later transformed into an apostle of love and peace. Not to mention other individual leaders, we may content ourselves with the fact that the various traits which we have found exemplified in the spiritual descendants of William Tennent were bound to make them generous in their attitude to all sister evangelical Churches. The members of the first Presbytery had been in intimate fellowship with their brethren in Massachusetts and Connecticut, as well as in England, Scotland, and Ireland. And the fathers of the Synod, remembering the causes and the baleful results of their recent separation into opposing factions, strove, when organizing the Church on a national scale, to preserve the common features of historic Presbyterianism rather than the peculiarities derived from any one section of the country. They succeeded in blending into a homogeneous whole elements as distinct and diverse as were those of the Puritan Presbyterianism that had entered the Church from New England and those of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism of the Middle and Southern Colonies. As we trace the development of our Church down to the creation of the first General Assembly, we become convinced that the Log College men and their successors were true to the genius of the Reformed faith which regards the communion of Christians as made up of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. What President Harrison said of the Presbyterian Church of our

generation is equally true of our Church in the eighteenth century: "There is no body of Christians in the world that opens its doors wider or more lovingly to all who love the Master. It is catholic in its sympathy and in its coöperation with all Churches." Our venerated fathers were convinced, as we are, that the differences among true evangelicals are of less importance than the essentials of the faith which they hold in common; that an undue insistence on minor distinctions of doctrine, worship, and polity, is wasteful and sinful; and that only through united effort can the powers of evil arrayed against us be overcome.

As to-day we thank God for the great heritage that is symbolized for us in the Log College of Neshaminy, let us, with our enlarged opportunities of service, imitate the honored founder and his apostolic band of followers in loyalty to the same written and Incarnate Word of God, in zeal for the salvation of men, in the maintenance of our civil and religious liberties, in the furtherance of sound learning, and in the promotion of that spirit of generous catholicity which alone can make us realize our true oneness with all our brethren in Christ.