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SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
Canadian Independent.
NOVEMBER, 1876.

ZION CHURCH—MONTREAL.

INDUCTION of the REV. ALFRED J. BRAY.
(Late of Manchester, England.)

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

THE WORK AND OFFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—CHURCH UNITY—WHAT IT MEANS AND WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN.

(From the Montreal "Gazette," October 30th, 1876.)

MY FRIENDS,—Three weeks ago I said to my congregation in England, at the close of my last sermon "and now, farewell: It may be for years, and it may be for ever. I can see but a little way, and know not what lies before me. I go to a new country—to fresh experiences; perhaps to fresh trials." You will believe me when I say I could scarce command my tongue to utter that word of parting. It meant to me and mine the sundering of ties we had learned to hold as dear and sacred things. It meant separation from friends who had lavished their love upon us; it meant the breaking up of "home, sweet home," and having a thousand tender associations wrenched away. To me it meant also the laying down of a ministry which I had loved with a great love, separation from earnest and true fellow-workers, from a congregation who had heard me with intelligence and appreciation and a constant generosity. We had learned to esteem each other. They were a great, free people, owning in me no priest, no vicar, no slave, but a friend and a brother, to whom they had given confidence, a free pulpit and the right to freedom of speech. To leave such a place and such a people was a hard, a sad, a bitter trial. Com· what may, the memory of my life and work in Manchester will always be a sweet and precious thing. But the separation was expedient for me. The

strain of work had been too much, and to change the place of labor would be, I knew, to relax the strain and give me for a time comparative rest. At your own request I paid a visit to this country back in the summer and preached several sermons in this pulpit. I had no thought of ever becoming the pastor of this church, so I made no effort to catch the fancy of the people. But most of those who gave me their ears gave me their hearts also at that time. I valued the gift—I went back to England feeling sure that there were hosts of true and great-hearted men and women in the Canadian Dominion. And when the invitation came to assume the pastorate of this church I was almost startled every now and again to find myself considering the matter as a possibility. The unlikely has come to pass. The All-wise Father and Master of our destinies has brought us together in this close and sacred relationship of pastor and people. Our prayers for guidance have been earnest; we have cried to heaven with passionate pleading; we believe the voice has come forth; we believe the finger has pointed the way. Friends, in the name of God our common Father, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, in the name of that truth of heaven, of earth, of life and immortality, which I have come to declare unto you, I give you greeting. Be our union a

happy one, blessed to each and all—be our work great and greatly prosperous—may our gates be praise and our walks salvation; may the divine benediction be on us always; may the words I shall speak from this pulpit be “a savour of life unto life.” I expect trials; I know they will come. When the storm sweeps over the forest every tree will sway and bow before it. And we are blown upon by so many winds that each one is reached at some time. I am glad that, for storm is the nursing mother of true manhood. Disappointments are the salt of life. In fight we lose fear and gain skill. I have never found that I could count on all men as my friends. I have had men to love me and men to hate me, and have felt as thankful for my foes as for my friends. “I am debtor both to the Greek and to the barbarian.” A ministry—a christian ministry let alone by all; heard with indifference; never scoffed at by any Sadducee; never stoned by any Pharisee; never prayed against by any lean-sould formalist; that would indeed be a sad thing—a bitter thing—an accursed thing, from which God in his mercy save me. For remember, friends, I am here to do what I know of God’s will, and to speak what I know of the counsel of God. I am here to speak words of truth-telling to the minds and hearts of men—words that shall strengthen the weak and comfort the sad and win sinners to the cross of Christ. I am here to brighten the old man’s evening of life, and tell him of the nightless heaven, and the Christ who has purchased the home for the man and the man for the home. I am here to help the strong bear the burden of life in the heat of day, and to teach the young how to equip themselves for the strife and the work of the world. Let me tell you, in as few and as plain words as I can, what is my conception of the work and office of the ministry. I utterly repudiate all and every pretension to what is called the priestly character or any attempt to stand between the soul of man and God. The priest declares that his particular function is to communicate salvation to man by outward means, baptism, penitence, communion, absolution, extreme unction, and the like; with that monstrous pretension I am at war. And the minister is not in the place of Vicar, either for man or for God—is not even a special mediator between sinner and judge. He may succeed to the spirit of the apostles, but not to the office; he may be in the line of their thought—may be perpetuating and developing their great work; he may be

servng the same master with equal knowledge and zeal and inspiration, but in no other way can he with show of reason or modesty claim to be in the line of Apostolical descent. But while I disclaim the lordship of any man’s conscience or the mastery of any man’s faith, so neither should the minister be, so *neither shall he be* in my person, the slave of any man, or any number of men—of any set of opinions, or any combination of creeds. A minister robbed of his freedom—compelled to utter the shibboleth of a congregation or a church—what is he? I will tell you, painting from the life. He is a mean little man, with a mean little soul, that every day gets meaner; he slinks about from house to house, speaking smooth things to find favour; his sermons are homilies cut out from the writings of the Fathers, or some modern divines whose orthodoxy is not suspected. If a new thought should chance to shoot into his mind like a sunbeam piercing a fog, he examines it carefully, not to find the truth of it, but the chance of its acceptance with the people. He sees that men in their love of wealth and haste to be rich have hardened their hearts, and deadened their conscience—taking “the interest table as their creed—their pater noster and their decalogue” have grown proud and altogether godless—but he is afraid to preach against this pride and love of wealth—afraid to lift his voice and bid them “weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them” because Dives, who gives a handsome contribution, would be offended. He is afraid to lift his voice against any popular and appointed evil, for he must preach to please the people, since he must please the people if he would live. He will not venture to depart from the old and well-defined lines. If by mistake he utters a doubt of a venerable doctrine he will at once apologise and promise to offend no more. He is at times a man of war, but is always careful to fight with only men of straw. He is no true minister. He is false to his calling, false to himself, false to those who hear him, and false to the Christ whose Gospel he should preach—he is even more to be despised than the people who have taken away his manful right of freedom. Such a degraded and degrading position as that, by the grace of God, I hold in contempt. I have one master, even Christ. High heaven is my court of appeal. “Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us.” There is

no need that a minister should have a set of smooth and peaceful circumstances; no need that he should be rich, or famous; no need that he should live long; there is only need that he should speak out the message God has given him; only need that he should take hold of right and stand to it, saying, like stout Martin Luther, "I can no other, God help me;" there is only need that he win the favour of heaven on his good and faithful work. The true minister will strive to give to those who hear him a just idea of God, not always after their thought, but always according to his own. He will say to the people, "God is all power, and all wisdom, and all goodness. He is not to be conceived of by you, as the moral chancellor of the realm holding a bankrupt humanity to all that is written in the bond. God is not a king, great and terrible, whose sceptre is a rod of iron. He is a Father, infinite in power, in wisdom and in love. His goodness rays out in all directions, seeking to touch and bless the all of things. He is a Father—take all you know of good in human fatherhood; all its tenderness of care, all its patience when the prodigal is wandering, all its readiness to forgive, all its joy when he returns, and all that and more God is to the sons of men. He gave His Son in human form to human life and work, to sorrow and sacrifice and death, not because He was so angry or so careful to have justice done, not to incline His heart to the sinful of the earth, but that the power of sin might be broken and man be rescued from evil. He gave His Son to the world not to save the integrity of His moral government, but to save the souls of men by winning them back to God. The work of Christ has gone down to the very roots of all life; it is higher than heaven, it is deeper than hell; it prevails in time, it prevails in eternity, its centre is everywhere, its circumference is nowhere, and it is living bread for all who hunger, living waters for all who thirst, life for all the dead. Man came from the hand of God in purity and beauty. God is the author of every spirit, and each bears the image of his Maker. Man is not sent into the world totally depraved, evil only in every limb of his body and every faculty of his mind, but with tendencies to good and tendencies to evil, and a free will to choose either. And each has chosen evil, sinning against himself, against his brother-man and against his God. But Christ has redeemed him by living in love and holiness and self-denial, and dying in will-

ing sacrifice for him: and since the glad tidings have sounded forth "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The things of life—the good and the evil thereof—are being over-ruled by a loving Providence for man's eternal welfare. God made the world to bless it; His purposes and plans are all for good; sorrow and pain and death are but ministering angels. But, let no man hide the secret thought in his heart that in the love and mercy of God, in the work and dying of Jesus Christ, he will find immunity from the consequences of his sins. Do wrong in any way—defraud a brother, devour a widow's house, betray the confidence of man or woman, live in sin against God, secret or declared, deny his right to your love and obedience—and not your office in the Church, not your after-works of faith, not your prayers and tears of penitence can save you from the punishment that is due. Evil is not absolute, but it is an inviolable law of the universe that "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." Such is the message I purpose to deliver. I have not given the whole of it, but just the whole in outline as to doctrines. But it seems to me that the minister's work is less than half done when he has declared, as best he knows how, the true idea as to God and Christ and man. Correctness of life is vastly more important than correctness of creed. It is better to have a wrong idea than to do a wrong act. Religion, as I understand it, consists of these two—inward sentiment and outward conduct—good living as the result of good thought and feelings. Religion cannot be built up in a creed—it cannot be held in separation from the thought of the mind, the feelings of the heart, the word of the lips and the work of the hands—it cannot be held in perfect form as sincere sentiment, or expressed by a ceremony. It cannot be worn as an amulet around the neck. It is a sacred fire in the heart, making pure every passion—making noble every motive—ennobling all the man, and all the work of every day, bracing the nerves to the robustness of manly achievement. Christianity is essentially a moral religion. It doesn't lay stress upon any one virtue, but upon all virtues—the great things of life and the small things are to be approached in the same lofty spirit of piety. It sets more store on *being* than on *seeming*; more on the love that gives a cup of cold water than on the long prayers of a bearded Rabbi. It requires faith first, and then looks for just and beautiful works.

There are religions which profess to give its priests the power to command rain, to banish pain and pestilence, to make the devil speak truth, or charm a murderer into heaven for a consideration. Christianity has no such tricks. It has no passport by which the knave and the sluggard, dying, may pass into heaven without question; it is not a special training which pious persons are to go through in order to prepare themselves for a future world, but it calls upon each man and every man to do the work of Christ in the world—in the world as He did it—in the places of man's toiling and passion and sin—doing noble deeds from noble motives, leaving the future in the hands of Him who looks with approval on every high endeavor, and with pitying tenderness on every failure, rewarding for the motive and not for the success. Christ in men—in the mind as thought, in the heart as feeling, in the conscience as justice—that is first; and then a pure morality, a perfect walk, a beauty of character that must shine as light, winning souls to our great and common Father. You cannot have purity of conduct apart from spiritual life, and you cannot maintain a spiritual life unless it is allowed to arise and shine in the divine splendour of just and holy works. To have a correct creed is not the only thing needed to constitute a man a Christian, nor to have a correct feeling—nor to have a correct walk before the world. There must be a union of these, a great and holy inward sentiment, and a great and holy outward service. And the true minister will speak and work and live for the promotion of that morality. He will strive to inspire men with a great desire after Christ likeness; not so much that they may save themselves, but that they may save others. He will publish the Gospel, not only by preaching Christ on the mount teaching the people, Christ opening the eyes of the blind, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowful, raising the dead—Christ on the cross bearing the world's sin away; but he will preach Christ in the home, making sacred the relationships of husband and wife, of parents and children; Christ in the market place and the store, teaching buyer and seller to be just each to the other. Christ in the senate and the hall of legislature, teaching men to frame good and beneficent laws for the suppression of vice and the promotion of virtue. Christ everywhere, and in all things of thought and action, blessing and beautifying the all of human life. The true minister of Christ will

preach against wrong, be it in the man or in the people, be it popular or unpopular, be it for himself or against himself. With consequences he has no concern—be the attempted work hopeless or full of promise—it is nothing to him. He will speak though the heavens fall. This is my purpose, and I ask God for grace and strength to carry it into practice, to preach not only, and not most, the great doctrines of the Bible, but to aim, most of all, at preaching a high Christian morality, integrity of conduct, beauty of character, to flatter neither rich nor poor, nor to pass either by. I shall preach against the sins of the church, the fault-finding, the Godless gossiping, the indolence and hardness of it. I shall preach against the sins of commerce, the false measures, the over-reaching, the craft, the lying of it. I shall preach against the sins of Parliament, demanding not the promotion of any party, but the promotion of true principles in the interests of all the people. I shall ask for justice between man and man, and holiness before God.

I have spoken of the doctrines, and of the morality, but there is one other phase in Christian ministers' public work I should not like to pass without notice to-night, that is the promotion of *unity* among men. He must seek by all his might in life and speech to join the people in a great and holy brotherhood. Our calling is to try and build men up in faith and truth to perfectness of character. But men do not often grow to greatness in isolation. They are like trees which grow best in forests, when each gives shelter to each. Men grow with the word—development can only go on—the work of faith can only be done, when the state of things is helpful to all. They must be united, they must be as one, they must form a brotherhood before they can be strong and full men, perfect and Christ-like. So there must be unity, in the interests of each individual and of the collective whole. The great prayer of Jesus Christ was that his disciple might be one. He taught them to seek a community of interests, each doing good to all, and all caring for each. It has been the work of the Church ever since. She has recognized her mission among her own members and in the world, and sought to bind men together in concord and love. But it seems to me that while the Church has been right as to the main idea, she has been wrong as to means and methods. We have not seen clearly what are the real and possible grounds of a Christian brotherhood

Two methods have been adopted for bringing men into unity and both have failed. One was to bring about an intellectual agreement, and the other was to bring about an institutional agreement. Just look at it a moment and you will not wonder at the failure.

The effort has been made, is being made now, to bring about an intellectual agreement in matters of religion. That is, men shall think of the same thing in the same way; use the same forms of expression and subscribe to the same logical deductions. But such agreement always has been, is now, and always will be impossible. It is a well-known fact that physical truth, though easy, though demonstrable to the senses, is very difficult of a common expression. Men discover facts of the material world, they analyse and synthesise and reach the point of certainty, and yet, not many of them can be got to adopt the same form of words to describe or to define anything. Nature seems simple enough—natural truths are not hard to find, and yet scientists have no settled and no fixed forms of expression. They have spoken at sundry times, and always in diverse manners. If physical truth, though easy, is difficult of a common expression, what wonder that men have found it impossible to bring about an intellectual agreement concerning moral truth. For moral truth is opalescent—it reflects a light from within, and on the surface shows many and varied hues. In the Bible you have absolute truth, but it flashes in many-colored glory. The opal shows many colors. You cannot separate them—they do not create each other—they do not account for each other, and they do not contradict each other. You cannot say the gem is white, or green or yellow, or red. It is white and green and yellow and red. Moral truth shines like that; it is opalescent, and can hardly appear the same to any two who look.

Then again, religion is a progressive revelation to the mind and heart of men. As men grow, as they get greater range and more keenness of spiritual vision, as they become more wise and more spiritually minded, as they become more Christ-like in character and more in sympathy with God, so the truth is more and more unfolded and developed before them. The world is set to an ascending scale; it is ever reaching up, passing from stage to stage. Tongues cease, prophecies fail, knowledge passes away. The plot of providence is not yet played out; the divine purposes are not yet fully unfolded; man is seeing through a glass darkly; he has imperfect

faith and partial knowledge. Christ is ever saying to His earnest followers: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." While that is so, how can there be an intellectual agreement? Men are in different stages of development; some see more than others, for they are more spiritually minded. The church has always its prophets, men of earnest souls, men of deep and true piety, men with a God-ward look that pierces Heaven, and the Church has its Pharisees, who stone the prophets and kill them if they can.

It seems to me that the prime cause of our strifes and hatreds is this, unwillingness to recognize the fact that truth is of varied and various aspects, and comes in progressive revelation. No form of creed can be permanent, for it does not hold or express the whole of divine truth; no dogma can be unchangeable, because no dogma known to man is absolutely true. It may have truth, but there is truth not contained in it. I know how difficult it is for men to give up their old and cherished notions, and I know how bitter a thing it is to attack doctrines sacred to the people; doctrines which made our fathers good and brave, and our mothers virtuous and beautiful; doctrines which have given men strength to bear the ills of life, and winged consolation in the hour of death. But in the interests of divine truth and future generations that hard and bitter thing must often be done. Knowledge must be yielded for a larger wisdom. What we have to learn is this—that we are children; that we know but in part; that our doctrines may be wrong, and that truth is more to be valued than comfort of mind, or the friendship of men, or ease of circumstance—aye, more to be valued than life itself. We think we know all about the plan of Providence; all about the divine methods of government; all about the Bible, and all about the mind of God concerning us. Well, men have often thought that, and as often has time shown them to have been wrong. Here is an illustration of it. There was a man in the land of Esau, whose name was Job. The same was perfect and upright—one that feared God and eschewed evil. He was great in goodness and high in honor. All at once there came crashing in upon him most startling calamities. Blow after blow fell until the man was prostrated. He had three friends who loved him well. They were good and earnest men, possessed of a supreme regard for truth, and they came to comfort Job. They firmly held the great and dominant religious dogma of

their day, which was this: That virtue was always rewarded by prosperity, and vice always punished by sickness or adversity. Here was their friend suffering in body and estate, and taking counsel of their dogma; they said: "Job must be a great sinner, or he would not have to suffer so." They were good men; they were sincere men; they were learned in the religious lore of the day; but they only held a partial truth—the orthodoxy of the age was wrong. There were "more things in Heaven and earth" than their philosophy had dreamt of. While those men are reiterating their doctrines as to God's moral government of the world, go behind the scenes and you may see the secret of the plot. In high heaven a man's destiny is being fought out. Before God it has been said that no man loved goodness for its own sake, but only for its profit. It had been stated in open court of heaven that man is wholly selfish; selfish in his virtues and in his vices; that if he served God it was all for gain. One has come to preach in heaven the total depravity of the human race. A scoff has been flung in the face of God against the universe He has made, an i against the most beautiful and pious forms of human life. And Job is called upon to vindicate Almighty God, to uphold in his own person the divine honor and the power of divine love. Job's friends knew nothing of that, and it never occurred to them that their dogma might be wrong. They thought they knew the right of it, but we can see how they blundered. It was not that Job was suffering on account of his sins as they supposed, but the battle of heaven and of God was being fought by a man upon the earth. The lesson is plain—"we know in part and prophecy in part." The perfect is not yet come. The doctrines we hold may be wrong in some particular. While that is so, while our vision is so dim and our knowledge so small; while men differ so much, while God holds back so much from all, we can never be brought into intellectual accord; we can only hold our partial truths, cry for the light, and be generous towards all who differ from us. There is in the human mind and in the nature of truth a principle of variation, a principle that will make itself respected. And it is well. It assures to every man, who will use his reason, an individuality, a distinct personality, a place in the world and a view of moral truth all his own. Intellectual drones—men too idle or too indifferent to use their reasoning powers—men who let others think for them and reason for

them, may be brought to use a common form of expression, and to believe that they have found unity by intellectual agreement—but with serious, earnest, thinking men—with men who have grasped the cardinal doctrine of their own manhood, it never will be so. The other effort to unite men has been made in the direction of one institution. They said one Church for all the people—one set of machinery, and one way of working for all men. The Romish Church tried to do that for the world—the Episcopal Church tried to do it for England, and each has failed. It was inevitable. Men differ, and modes of operation and forms of speech must differ. Creeds became stereotyped things, but men do not. Institutions have a settled form, but men develop. The temple on Mount Moriah was great and very grand; it was built with much labor and most wondrous skill—the ceremony was imposing and impressive—it did for a time, meeting the wants of a nation. But it passed away, for the nation broadened into a world, for which only one temple was great enough and grand enough, Jesus Christ, the living Lord, in whose holiness, love, and power, man can hide his life and worship God.

I have a great regard for the Congregational form of church life and polity. I believe it to be nearest the Primitive Church in method of working. At first I find that the power was vested in the people—each Church acted separately and for itself, administering its own affairs. But I am not a Congregationalist mainly because of that. In this matter, as in most others, I hold a thoroughly utilitarian creed. I wouldn't hold a form of church government simply because it is venerable. The great idea of a church is that form may minister to life, and creed to alter Christian character: it is to build men up strong in faith mighty to do and to suffer their Master's will. And it is because the Congregational form of church order is most suited to my mental cast, because I think I see advantages to the individual and to the people in it, that I hold it. It lays upon men the duty of self-government; it compels them to take their share of responsibility, to exercise their judgment and assert their conviction. It teaches men that they are identified with the church, that it is expected of them that they be active members, bringing their highest faculties—all their powers of mind and soul, to build each other up in the perfectness of Christ. It demands of all its members that they show some proof of inward life, letting their faith bring forth just works. They choose their own pastor by their own unfet-

tered vote, allowing him freedom of speech. I believe the Congregational to be the best of all the churches, but not for worlds would I have our Congregationalism universal. The many sects of Protestantism are the strength of Protestantism. Each may find a church to suit him—for every reasonable man there is a home prepared. Not any sect would I abolish. Well yes, one perhaps—that of the Plymouth Brethren. Men cannot be united under an institution any more than under a creed.

How can they be united then? What is the real ground of brotherhood? This—*faith*. We shall find unity in sentiment, but not in science. What was Christ's idea of unity? As far as I can find it, this—a state of heart in which all men should experience love, sympathy, and a co-operative benevolence. They were to be one in love to God and love to all mankind—they were to join in works of charity, making all their life a blessing to all the world. And that is the only possible unity; it is the only true unity, for *love* is the universal solvent. When men are actuated by the sentiment of goodness; when they desire not only to be good but to do good, they will come together, that with united force they may carry out their lofty purpose. Difficulties which had stood up as separating barriers, will disappear as snow before the breath of spring. Differences in modes of thought and forms of worship will not be hindrances, but only diverse ways of rendering service unto God. Love creates a sympathy so deep, so tender, and yet so strong, that all doubts will be solved and all difficulties mastered. And love is the universal composite; it fuses all things, and makes the many into one. Everything it touches gets transfigured. It melts down the hard, it rounds the angular, it beautifies the ugly, it uplifts and sublimates the ignoble. *Love*—that is our ground of unity. We are not going to unite the different Churches; we are not going to be united to others by agreement in matters of doctrine and of form; we shall only be made one by all exercising the Christianity good men feel in the heart. The Christ in us is always the same to each soul that feels the holy presence. There is a common Christianity. but it is that which burns in the hearts of pious men. And that unity I shall seek to promote. In Christ's name I will join any Church, or all the Churches, in trying to do the people good. My word and my work may be worth but a little, but both shall be ungrudgingly given in the interests of peace and concord. I shall

esteem none the less because they differ from me in doctrines or forms of worship. I walk according to my light; they walk according to theirs. We will each esteem the other and join in works of love. I am sure of this—I may be wrong—and I am sure of this—those who differ from me may be wrong. What then? why generosity on both sides, and mutual sympathy.

But let me say this—very briefly, but most emphatically—against the church which here is dominant and despotic, and is using its power to hinder the prosperity of this country—is keeping down the people in ignorance, and overriding the minority—against that church, not because of its creed so much, but because of its tyranny, I shall wage war. It may be of small use, but I shall have done my duty. I am an Englishman—subject of an English government—and I know not how to assume a craven policy that truckles to a powerful majority. I will give to each man his right. I ask no more for myself; but *that* I must have.

And now one word to the church. Friends, this church has had an honorable past. It has done good and lasting work. We must do more yet—we must fill a greater place. But to do that we must be united—we must be filled with a burning enthusiasm. We exist, not for ourselves mainly, but for the good of others. If, being filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, we do good works; if our prayers are earnest—if our praises are flung to heaven to flower in the sky, then this Church will be as a place of springing fountains to many a thirsty soul. While I preach Christ in the pulpit, you must preach Christ in the street and the home. Your good lives will do a thousandfold more than my best sermons. My brothers and my sisters, I pledge you in the faithful love of the gospel of Christ—I pledge you in the name which is above every name, honored on earth by prostrate obedience and honored in heaven by undying song—I pledge you in the name of Him who is Father and Mother of mankind, to mutual sympathy and generosity, to kindness of judgment and of speech, to the exercise of that charity which covers a multitude of faults and never faileth—I pledge you to earnest and constant working for the good of men and the glory of God. Here, in the shadow of the Cross, in presence of that infinite and unutterable love, let us clasp hands in token of our brotherhood, and our devotion to Him who is the Prince of Peace, and the King of Glory, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.