

Thomas Talley, *Worship: Reforming Tradition*, (Pastoral Press Washington, 1990), pp. 125–142.

16. Cf. *Authority and Freedom in Liturgy*, ed. Kenneth Stevenson, (Grove, 1979), p. 37; Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer and the Talmud*, (de Gruyter, 1977).

17. 'Scripture and Prayer', p. 63.

18. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, (Fordham University Press, 1982).

19. Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*, (Oxford, 1993).

20. *On The Way*, pp. 56ff.

21. Cf. Michael Vasey, 'The Family and the Liturgy', pp. 181–185 in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen Barton, (T&T Clark, 1996).

22. 'Scripture and Eucharist' forthcoming in *Our Thanks and Praise*, ed. David Holeton, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998).

23. Cf. *Reading the Bible at the Eucharist*, p. 12.

24. Thirty such modules appeared in *The Promise of His Glory*, (Church House Publishing, 1991), pp. 377–378, 404–412.

25. For a useful introduction to Charles Simeon on preaching see Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon: Preacher Extraordinary*, (Grove Books, 1979).

# The Mystery of Salvation

## Thoughts on the Church of England Doctrine Commission Report (1995)

GERALD BRAY

The latest production of the Church of England Doctrine Commission claims to be the third in a trilogy, beginning with *We Believe in God* (1987) and continuing with *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (1991), which both is and is not quite the same subject. Now we have *The Mystery of Salvation* (1995), which the Commission maintains is directly linked to the previous two, mainly because, like them, it purports to deal with a central Christian doctrine in ways which are meant to be accessible to non-specialists and the 'enquiring public', whoever they are. I rushed out to get my copy on the day of publication, only to be greeted by the manager of the SPCK bookshop with the comment that he was surprised to find anyone interested in it, and it must be said that after the initial media hype, which concentrated on what the report had to say about hell — and got it wrong — the Report has faded into relative obscurity, if not yet quite oblivion.

In some ways this is a pity, because the Report is a good indicator of the current state of Anglican theology, and in particular of the impact which Evangelicals are making on the Church. Connoisseurs of Doctrine Commission Reports will remember *Christian Believing* (1976), which read like an atheist tract, and its sequel, *Believing in the Church* (1981), which likewise made *We Believe in God* appear to be refreshingly novel and challenging, even though it could hardly be called theologically sophisticated. Those accustomed to this sort of thing would not have been at all surprised to discover

that the latest Report was long on mystery but short on salvation, but although there are certainly vestiges of that tendency, which the authors of the report prefer to call 'obfuscation', it must be said that *The Mystery of Salvation* is a good deal more biblical and theological in its approach than most of its predecessors have been. This must surely be the result of the Evangelical presence on the Doctrine Commission, which is strong and articulate. There is a welcome emphasis on the New Testament, and on such fundamental Christian doctrines as the Trinity, which the authors of the Report unequivocally state lies at the heart of all Christian theology, and therefore of the mystery of salvation too. Even more, the Commission as a whole has committed itself to exploring the implications of this aspect of Christian teaching within the parameters of traditional biblical and theological teaching, giving adequate representation to the wide range of views which has been present in historical Anglicanism. That means that for once, the Evangelical position will not be ignored, even if it will not be presented as the only, or even as the best option available. Committed Evangelicals will naturally be unhappy to see their position ranked as merely one among many, but we must recognize that at least it is there and it is not being condemned out of hands as a survival from some regrettable past. It is not as much as we would like, of course, but surely we ought to recognize that it is a considerable improvement on earlier productions of this kind.

At the same time though, it must also be said with regret that the Report is very much a product of its times, and that it demonstrates quite clearly how some Evangelicals have paid the price of influence in higher Church circles by selling their theological birthright for the pottage of respectability as defined by current standards of political correctness. A good example is the extreme deference paid to feminism, which at first sight would seem to have little to do with salvation and which (as the authors freely admit) was not even in the remit given to the commission by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet in spite of this, the members of the Commission who, it is fair to say, are feminists to a man, regard gender issues as of major importance and regurgitate almost without thinking all the claptrap which we have grown accustomed to hearing on this apparently inexhaustible subject. For example, they use up at least two whole pages congratulating themselves on the extent to which they have managed to avoid masculine pronouns for God, though in fairness it must be said that they do plead for the moderate use of 'he' and are not prepared to sacrifice the biblical language of 'Father' and 'Son', which they regard as fundamental to the Christian revelation. Their approach is rather to enrich the traditional vocabulary by including other images of divine-human relationships, which might more easily embrace the feminine. All of this is fairly tame stuff, but it becomes serious when it starts to affect the substance of Christian doctrine. One of the reasons given for being unhappy with the language of sacrifice in relation to Christ's death is given as the following (p. 114):

'The example of Christ's sacrifice has been invoked to legitimate the burden of pain, drudgery, personal humiliation and social inferiority borne by women in a tradition that is overwhelmingly patriarchal, sexist and androcentric.'

This is a very serious charge, and I for one would like to know what is based on, since no examples of it or references to it are given, but it is rather typical of the approach taken by the Report to many issues of this kind. Sweeping generalizations are made without evidence being provided to back them up, and then the authors of the Report show how understanding they are by backing away from what they have thus caricatured as 'traditional images of the atonement' (also on p. 114). I have heard any number of sermons on Christ's sacrifice and read a good many books on the subject from different periods in the history of the church, but not once, as far as I can recall, has the subject ever been connected with discrimination against women.

The Report is also concerned to keep in step with the latest findings of modern science, which apparently means that they reject what they call the traditional body-soul dichotomy (without finding an adequate replacement for it, because this is apparently impossible

in the present state of scientific knowledge). Here again they have simplified matters to the point of caricature. The body-soul dichotomy, as they put it, may have been a feature of ancient Platonism, but it was never really accepted by the Christian church, which spent a good deal of time and effort trying to come up with an alternative. The classical Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh (the Latin word *caro*, flesh, was changed to 'body' in the 1542 English translation and has remained so ever since) was meant to overcome this dichotomy, and it is therefore wrong to picture it as having ever been a part of Christian orthodoxy. Of course that is not to say that there have not been some people who have used the expression 'saving souls' loosely, and denigrated the body as a result, but this has never been typical. Nineteenth-century Evangelicals, for example, who were committed to the salvation of souls, were also in the forefront of social welfare, and it can be reasonably argued that when people lose a hunger for souls they are unlikely to show much interest in the needs of the body either. It is true that there are philosophical problems with the word 'soul', and Christian theology needs to reconsider its use of this word very carefully, but that is not to say that the church has been gravely misled for centuries. On the contrary, it has struggled with an inadequate vocabulary and transformed it, as the grace of God habitually does with us all.

The authors of the Report also want to reach out to dialogue with other world religions and philosophies, including dead ones like Marxism. That particular *faux pas* is a welcome reminder that political correctness, or trendiness as it used to be called, is like computer programmes, always out of date even before it reaches the shops. The members of the Commission are mesmerized by the notion of 'secularism', even though they cheerfully admit that social scientists cannot agree as to what that is or even whether it exists. A few quotes from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which I am sure must be daily reading on the Clapham omnibus are apparently enough to prove the point that 'modern man', when he can take his mind off the need for gender inclusiveness, is busily looking for 'fulfilment', which is equally hard to define but which everyone supposedly agrees is necessary to get us out of the predicament in which we find ourselves.

A quick tour of the local pubs, or even a few taxi rides, would soon convince the unprejudiced observer that the average person seldom if ever thinks about his supposedly dreadful plight and has never heard the word 'fulfilment', except perhaps in the sense of 'completing the terms of an order, contract or shipment', but as the Report is addressed to the enquiring public, and not to the real people out there, perhaps we can excuse this failing. Perhaps there are, somewhere in Britain, three or four people who are desperately seek-

ing 'fulfilment' and who want to know what the church has to offer them in this regard, but I have yet to meet them, and I think the same is probably true of you too. Be that as it may, it is quite clear from the Report that its authors believe that Christian salvation is the religious equivalent of what non-religious people call 'fulfilment', and that this provides some common ground for dialogue with them. They recognize, of course, that many people are happy, healthy, decent folk quite apart from any belief in God, and this puzzles them, since it would appear that the church has little or nothing distinctive to offer. This is an unacceptable conclusion and so the Report spends a good deal of time trying to explain to contented unbelievers why that is not enough. All human happiness is something which has been given, and what makes Christians different from others is that they recognize this, and give thanks to the God whom they believe has given them all these wonderful things.

It appears to be taken for granted that any truly saved person will experience physical, as well as spiritual contentment, and the Report even claims that this is a more biblical way of looking at 'salvation'. As it says on p. 85: 'In the Bible, religious and material salvation are much more closely related; and when one is claimed in the absence of the other, there is always an element of tension and paradox involved.' This may be true to some extent of the Old Testament, but there the covenant context must be remembered. In ancient Israel, the prosperity of the land was a sign of God's favour and a pointer to the salvation which was to come. Christ had to spend a good deal of his ministry disabusing his hearers of the notion that the Messianic paradise which they were expecting was about to arrive — his message was that his followers must abandon everything of this life, take up their cross, and follow him. Perhaps the authors of the Report imagine that Christians can pull their cross along on little wheels, or tuck it in the boot of the car!

As far as dealing with happy, morally upright unbelievers is concerned, how can we, as loving Christians, condemn them, when in many ways they are a shining example to us of how we ought to behave ourselves? This theme recurs with great regularity throughout the report, not least when it comes to considering the ultimate fate of sincere believers in other religions. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, is quoted as a good example of them. He apparently read the Sermon on the Mount more or less every day, which is certainly more often than most of us do, and regarded it as true and uplifting. He even went on record, we are told, as saying that if the Hindu scriptures were to disappear, he would be quite happy with the teaching of Jesus as his moral and spiritual guide. Whether there ever was a historical person called Jesus of Nazareth did not matter to Gandhi, because he was interested only in the teaching, not in the life and practice of the man who

supposedly gave it. Indeed, what infuriated Gandhi was the Christian insistence that the historical Jesus was of unique importance, because the Mahatma could not believe that such divine truth could possibly be restricted to only man!

The scandal of particularity, as this Christian trait is called, clearly makes the authors of the Report uncomfortable, but they have to admit that it cannot be removed from Christian tradition (p. 79). Whether we like it or not, Christianity is tied to Jesus Christ, a single individual who was also male, another potential source of embarrassment. The way out of this is to adopt what the Report calls the 'inclusivist' approach, though the authors hesitate to commit themselves to this unreservedly. Inclusivism, as they understand it, means that Christ is more than just a male, and reaches beyond the confines of the church, which is made up of those who have made explicit profession of faith. As the perfect human being, Christ has identified with everyone, female as well as male, and has overcome our alienation from God. Within the Trinitarian context, the Holy Spirit is active in other religions (p. 181), leading their faithful adherents to a knowledge of salvation which may not recognize Christ in this life but is sure to accept him in the next. We can expect to meet millions of these sincere believers when we get to heaven, even though the authors of the Report hesitate to call them 'anonymous Christians', in Karl Rahner's famous phrase, here on earth. In this life, sincere adherents of other faiths may by their very sincerity be led to persecute converts to Christianity, and the Report gives testimonies from ex-Muslims and ex-Hindus of the terrible difficulties which they have faced by becoming Christians. At the same time however, it also quotes other converts who have claimed that people known to them — usually close family members or teachers — were good enough to be saved even if they were not explicitly Christians, so the issue is left hanging. Rather oddly, nothing is said about the classic example of the sincere believer from another faith who felt compelled to put Christians to death, if he could. Would Saul of Tarsus have been saved by his sincerity? Perhaps the authors of the Report ought to read his own testimony on that subject for an answer!

The root of the problem, as the authors of the Report themselves admit, is what definition we are to give to the concept of 'salvation', and this can be determined only by deciding first of all what is wrong with the human race. If we do not diagnose correctly what our plight is, we are unlikely to find the right answer to it. This is very true, but unfortunately it is when we realize that the Report has got the diagnosis wrong that the rest of what it says all falls into place. According to this Report, Adam and Eve (or whoever they really were) were faced with the need to make moral choices, and they made the wrong ones. We who have come after

them also have to make moral choices, but as we have inherited their ancestral mess, there is really no chance that we shall decide differently. Thus, although we are technically free to do otherwise, we are so overwhelmed by the power of original sinfulness that we are caught up in it whether we like it or not. On the other hand, so the Report claims, Christians are delivered from this dreadful situation by baptism. This is so extraordinary a statement that it must be quoted in full (p. 135):

In baptism we are symbolically moved out of the sphere of influence of 'fallen humanity', all those social influences around us which incline towards sin and which are prior to any conscious choices of our own. Then, instead of being subject to such 'original' sin, all the sin that is prior to any reflection on our part, we are granted the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, there to conform us to the image of Christ, the definitive human being, will we but let him.

This, it must be said, is nothing but pious twaddle. Adolf Hitler was baptized — Stalin was even a seminarian — and look what the Holy Spirit did in their lives, once they were freed from the power of original sin. Baptism is an important covenantal sign of the grace of God, but it has no effect in and of itself. How could anyone calling himself Evangelical have concurred with this?

As for the rest, anyone who reads the first three chapters of Genesis carefully will soon discover that original sin is not about moral choices at all. Adam and Eve did not have the ability to distinguish between good and evil — it was only as a result of the fall that they acquired the ability to make moral choices! The sin of Adam and Eve was not immorality — there was nothing immoral about eating a piece of fruit — but disobedience to the express will of God. This the Report never mentions, and so it is not surprising that we nowhere find any suggestion that salvation has something to do with obedience to God's will. What we are told instead is that the main difference between an unbeliever who enjoys 'fulfilment' and a Christian is that the former takes it all for granted whereas the latter recognizes that somewhere behind it all there is a giver, whom we call the Triune God and to whom we are grateful. It would be hard, in fact, to find a clearer explanation of how salvation can be reduced to morality and politeness which, taken together, are the stock in trade of contemporary, ever-so-middle-class Anglicanism. This is not the gospel — a word which the Report mysteriously seems to avoid — but a human philosophy of life not unlike Epicureanism or (from a different cultural milieu) certain forms of Buddhism. As the Report states on p. 35: 'Salvation is to experience as the source and the goal of my own being and living the one who is the source and the goal of all things.' Even if there is some sense in which we might regard this as true, it is not the

way in which the Bible speaks about salvation, which brings me to my next point.

The Report defines 'salvation', to the extent that it can be said to define it at all, in such a broad way that it can include almost everything — and everybody. It is true that the Report is careful not to suggest that salvation is merely the natural fulfilment of the potential of the created order — creation and salvation, though of course they are closely linked (remember those ecologists out there!) must nevertheless be carefully distinguished from each other. Salvation, at the end of the day, is something much bigger and better than the mere completion of the created order, good and right though that is in its own way. But if the Report is careful to state that salvation is a divine act which must come from beyond the created order, even if it is not in opposition to it, it still gives no clear definition of what it is. The crucial concept of justification is mentioned only briefly, and then it is wrongly defined as something which 'shows that God is just or right to keep his side of the covenant or agreement even though we have not kept our side' (p. 107). In reality, justification is the way in which we describe the fact that we who are sinners and unjust in God's sight, have been put right with God by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who died to pay the price for our sins. In other words, when God the Father looks at us, he sees us covered in the righteousness of Christ and on that basis, he accepts us into his presence.

None of this has found its way into this Report. Even after Christ's death, we are told, we are still 'left to decide . . . whether we will receive what God in Christ has done on our behalf . . .' (p. 107), a statement which obviously rules out election, predestination and limited atonement — none of which is ever mentioned. Likewise, there is no distinction made between justification and sanctification. The Report mentions the work of the sixteenth-century Reformers in a positive way, but fails to see that it was this distinction which was absolutely central to their doctrine of salvation. *Simul iustus et peccator* — the belief that it is possible to be a justified sinner, i.e. to go to heaven without being perfect, is what caused the Reformers to redefine holiness, which in turn led them to a new understanding of what it is to be a 'saint' in the eyes of God, which in turn produced a different gospel message and a different type of church.

The uniqueness of Christ was that, as the sinless Son of God, he was able to fulfil the commands of the Father by his perfect obedience. Christ did not die on the cross in order to set us an example of perfect self-giving, but in order to pay the penalty incurred by our sins. To be fair, the Report recognizes that this is one way of looking at the issue, but Evangelicals cannot be content with this. As far as we are concerned, it is the only way which does justice to what the Bible is actually telling

us, and therefore we cannot accept that it should be relegated to one view among many, and even criticized for being inadequate — especially as regards the fate of morally good unbelievers. We do not accept that clean living is a ticket to heaven for anybody, Christian or non-Christian. When the Report says, as it does on p. 18, that many of the traditional ways of expressing how we are rescued from peril must force women to accept a highly negative self-image, we must protest that any truly biblical doctrine of salvation will force all of us, male and female alike, into that position. It is not heaven, after all, but hell which is populated by people of high self-esteem!

The report was condemned by the secular press because it supposedly went soft on the traditional doctrine of hell, but this is a misunderstanding. The offending passage is important enough to deserve to be quoted in full:

In the past the imagery of hell-fire and eternal torment and punishment, often sadistically expressed, has been used to frighten men and women into believing. Christians have professed appalling theologies which made God into a sadistic monster and left searing psychological scars on many. Over the last two centuries the decline in the churches of the western world of a belief in everlasting punishment has been one of the most notable transformations of Christian belief. There are many reasons for this change, but amongst them has been the moral protest from both within and without the Christian faith against a religion of fear, and the growing sense that the picture of a God who consigned millions to eternal torment was far removed from the revelation of God's love in Christ. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that the reality of hell (and indeed of heaven) is the ultimate affirmation of the reality of human freedom. Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total non-being.

There are many things which can be objected to in the above paragraph. First of all, it is not necessarily sadistic to portray God as consigning sinners to everlasting punishment — torment is a loaded word which had best be avoided — even if it is true that some people have fallen into this error. Nor is it right to suppose that hell is a deliberate choice made by a few incorrigible people — the awful truth is that a large percentage of the human race is condemned to hell, whether it chooses to go there or not. Neither heaven or hell has anything to do with our choice — where we go depends on God's electing grace, a concept which, it must regrettably be said, is entirely foreign to this Report. But even so, we must admit that the Report has room for some notion of hell, even if it fails to do justice to the biblical teaching

on the subject, and to that extent the media reports missed their target. Indeed, from the standpoint of the Church of England, the Report is more like a return to traditional orthodoxy than a departure from it, since it represents a rejection of universalism — something which would have been much less likely twenty years ago. It is true that universalism has been rejected in favour of inclusivism, which in many ways is not much better, but we must give credit where credit is due and accept that the media, as so often, was off-target here.

Much of the central portion of the Report is taken up with the doctrine of the atonement, and it is here perhaps more than anywhere else that Evangelicals will be quick to spot its inadequacy. First of all, the Report regards the atonement not as a doctrine but as a collection of theories, each of which has something interesting and important to say, but none of which is definitive. As the Report puts it (p. 100–1):

Story and symbol come first. They are worked out in images and metaphors, sometimes striking often paradoxical. Eventually doctrines of the atonement emerge, which are attempts to devise as coherent answers as possible to the questions raised by the narrative; and these doctrines have been many and varied in the history of Christian thought. To try to reduce this variety to a single agreed statement on the doctrine of the atonement would be untrue both to the New Testament and to our Anglican heritage.

No Evangelical, I would submit, can accept this. In the Appendix to the Report even its authors admit that the classical Anglican formularies, i.e. the 39 Articles and the Book of Common Prayer, adopt a penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, which is most in tune with the teaching of John Calvin. Calvin, of course, held this doctrine, not because he was a miserable old man but because he found it in the New Testament, and argued his case accordingly.

What the report says, in contrast to this, is that there is a growing consensus in favour of a combination of the Abelardian theory of exemplary, or representative atonement, combined with the notion of a suffering God, which has supposedly put paid to the classical notion of divine impassability. The result of this conjunction is the belief that God comes to us in Christ to share in our suffering and to bear it alongside us. He cannot always take it away, of course, but he can at least give us the strength to bear it. What has happened here is that the traditional understanding of the atonement, which is rooted in judicial categories of thought, has been replaced by what is essentially a medical model. Sin has become suffering, as if the two things were identical. This shift can be very clearly seen in objections to the notion of eternal punishment in hell, since once the judicial concept is disposed of we are left with a picture of eternal torment, which the anti-

suffering tendency finds repugnant. Again, let me quote (p. 113):

... there is little doubt that the traditional patriarchal images of God as king, lord, judge, warrior, etc. that belong to the traditional vocabulary of atonement with its central themes of law, wrath, guilt, punishment and acquittal, leave many Christians cold and signally fail to move many people, young and old, who wish to take steps towards faith.

And again (p. 122): 'For many Christians today the notion of God offering himself as a substitute to be punished for our sins is deeply repellent.'

Once again, we are confronted with sweeping assertions with no evidence to support them, but Evangelicals must surely rebel against statements of this kind. If there is someone who finds the doctrine of substitution 'deeply repellent', is that someone a Christian at all? How can you be a Christian without accepting that Christ took your place on the cross? You may not be able to expound that with theological precision, but to deny it, or to find it repellent, is surely unacceptable. A true Christian who is ignorant of the penal substitution — and there have been many of those — will surely accept it gladly and rejoice in it once he or she discovers it. But this of course, brings us straight back to the heart of the whole problem with this Report. It assumes that a Christian is a person who has been baptized and has made a conscious decision to follow Christ. Non-Christians whose life leads to the same practical results will probably get the same benefits in the end as Christians will, though they do not know this yet. In other words, Christianity is defined in terms of ritual and works, the two things against which all true Christians since the time of Christ have protested most vehemently. To be saved is to be chosen by God — not the other way round — and God has chosen a remnant, which the Bible calls the elect. This is a fundamental covenantal theme, which the Report implicitly rejects. I am not a Christian because I have been baptized, nor because I follow the moral teachings of Jesus, nor even because I believe that the Bible is true. I am a Christian because God has chosen me and put his Spirit in me to form me in the image and likeness of Christ, in spite of what I would rather believe and do. Because of this I recognize the significance of baptism, I follow the teachings of Jesus as the Spirit directs me and I obey the Scriptures because God reveals their truth to me. At this point, and to this extent, true Christianity is the exact opposite of the religion being promoted in this Report. It is in fact a clever imitation of the real thing

— so clever that it has apparently won over even some professing Evangelicals.

To sum up then, I would say that *The Mystery of Salvation* is not an adequate statement of Christian truth from a consistently biblical and Evangelical standpoint, and it is hard to see how any preacher of the gospel will benefit much from what it says. On the other hand, as a statement of semi-official Church opinion ('teaching' would be too strong a word here) it is a great improvement on most of its predecessors, and says a number of things which we must be grateful for. I have already mentioned the insistence on keeping 'Father-Son' language, but even more important than this is the continued insistence on the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to God, in spite of the openness shown to other religions. Whatever truth they may contain, the Report concludes (p. 184) by saying: 'Because . . . ultimate salvation is found in Christ, mission remains the central task of the Christian Church.' This affirmation will not be universally welcomed in the House of Bishops, some of whose members frown on evangelism to Jews, for example, and so we must be grateful for the clarity with which the priority of mission is expressed. It is entirely possible that the Church of England will ultimately be disestablished at least partly because the state will reject this note of spiritual exclusivity, and we must applaud the courage of Church leaders who are not afraid to stand out against the pluralism of our age in this way. At the same time however, we must sadly conclude that what the Report has to offer is a long way from true, Evangelical Christianity, however much it may echo it at different points, and we must be careful not to fall into the trap which it unwittingly sets for us. Perhaps the real lesson we have to learn from this is that Evangelicals cannot co-operate in theological ventures with those who do not share their fundamental presuppositions, in this case the belief that God has chosen us, not the other way round, and that we are sinners saved by grace alone. If we do not insist on that to begin with, what we shall end up with is something not unlike this Report — a statement which contains some good things but which is fundamentally wrongheaded, and therefore liable to mislead the unwary into a rejection of the gospel, leaving only enough traces of the faith once delivered to the saints to make it possible for them to deny that they have been fooled. May God grant us the grace and the wisdom we need to avoid that trap, and keep us faithful to the Christ who took our place on the cross and paid the price for us, so that we might dwell in eternity with him.