

Daniel 9:24 and the Atonement

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"Seventy 'weeks' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy." (Dan 9:24, margin)

Introduction

In this paper I argue that the six infinitive clauses of Dan 9:24 refer to the life, death, and high priestly ministry of Christ--first in respect to sin (clauses 1-3) and then in respect to righteousness (clauses 4-6). Of special interest are those clauses which have to do with Christ's ministry after the cross--clause 3 because of the word *l'kapper* "to atone" and clause 6 because of the words *qôdeš qôdāšîm* "most holy." In the past we have studied Dan 9:24 because it provides a starting point for the 2300 days time prophecy of Dan 8:14, but we should study it for its theological content as well. At issue is our understanding of the doctrine of atonement.

Structure of the Passage

Below I discuss the noun part of each clause, the verb part of each clause, both parts together, and whether six is the right number of clauses. Some ancient versions have seven.

The noun part of each clause

There is a question how to outline the verse. When we look only at nouns, the arrangement is clearly two groups of three clauses each, where the first three have a negative orientation and the last three are positive. See table 1.

Table 1
Nouns: Two Groups Of Three

Num	Negative	Num	Positive
1	Transgression	4	Righteousness
2	Sin	5	Vision and prophecy
3	Wickedness	6	Most holy

The verb part of each clause

When we look only at verbs the clauses could be arranged as either three groups of two or two groups of three. See tables 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2
Verbs: Three Groups of Two

Num	First Group	Num	Second Group	Num	Third Group
1	Finish	3	Atone for	5	Seal up
2	Put an end to	4	Bring in	6	Anoint

Table 3
Verbs: Two Groups of Three

Num	First Group	Num	Second Group
1	Finish	4	Bring in
2	Put an end to (<* <i>h</i> tm "seal")	5	Seal up (<* <i>h</i> tm "seal")
3	Atone for	6	Most holy

The respected commentator C. F. Keil passes over the first alternative quickly (table 2), pointing out that only the Massoretes who edited the Hebrew text during the Middle Ages and a handful of modern scholars understand the clauses as three groups of two.¹ The second alternative is preferred (table 3), not because it is the majority view, but because of the symmetry that follows from bringing the two examples of Hebrew **h*tm ("seal") into comparison with each other in clauses 2 and 5 (at the center of their respective groups). This symmetry emphasizes the parallel between the first three verbs and the last three.

Nouns and verbs together

The infinitive clauses under review of course do not consist of nouns alone or verbs alone. They have both together. When the ABA ABA pattern involving verbs is combined with the AAA BBB pattern involving nouns, it is evident on structural grounds (i.e., without reference to what the clauses themselves say) that Dan 9:24 contains two groups of three clauses each, rather than three groups of two. See table 4.

Table 4
Both Sets of Clauses Arranged as
Two Groups of Three

Num	Verbs	Nouns
Group One: Negative		
1	Finish	Transgression
2	Put an end to (<* <i>h</i> tm "seal")	Sin
3	Atone for	Wickedness
Group Two: Positive		
4	Bring in	Righteousness
5	Seal up (<* <i>h</i> tm "seal")	Vision and prophecy
6	Most holy	Most holy

In table 4 "the three members stand in reciprocal relation to each other: the fourth statement corresponds to the first, the fifth to the second, the sixth to the third--the second and

the fifth present even the same verb *h̄tm*."² With these facts in view, when we apply Dan 9:24 to history we must do so in such a way that clauses one and four apply together first, clauses two and five apply together next, and clauses three and six apply together last. Any historical application should be consistent with the constraints imposed on it by literary structure.

Are six clauses enough?

Before going on let me point out that the Greek Septuagint and Theodotian add a seventh clause to the other six. That this seventh clause did not belong to the text originally, but was added later, can be deduced from two facts. First, the extra clause is not the same in the Septuagint as it is in Theodotian, nor is it added in the same place. The Septuagint adds something resembling clause 5 between clauses 3 and 4 and Theodotian adds something resembling clause 3 between clauses 2 and 3. This is one consideration. And second, neither the Syriac nor the Latin have any such added clause. See appendix.

The thing to notice here is that the Greek translators thought six clauses were not enough and tried to supply the lack. I submit that six is exactly the right number. The Hebrew text of Dan 9:24 needs no correcting, but to understand the reasons why, we must apply the passage to history.

Historical Application of the Six Clauses

The six infinitive clauses before us deal respectively with the life (clauses 1 and 4), the death (clauses 2 and 5), and the high priestly ministry of Christ (clauses 3 and 6). Each clause has its mate, each reinforcing the point contained in the other.

According to H. C. Leupold, "The six statements that follow cover the sum total of the purposes of God with man."³ This observation may well be correct, but not on the basis of formless generalities. Before Christ could die on the cross as our sinless Sacrifice He had to live a sinless life. So first we have the thirty-three years leading up to the cross (clauses 1 and 4). During this time we see earth's only successful example of righteousness by works. According to Paul, Christ was not under grace; He was "born under law" (Gal 4:4). Having worked out a character of perfect righteousness on our behalf, He died a sacrificial death on the cross (clauses 2 and 5). And having returned to heaven He presents His blood (in His living body) before the Father as our great High Priest (clauses 3 and 6). For nearly two thousand years Christ has had this ongoing or "daily" ministry, for which the sequel is the great antitypical yearly service, or day of atonement. When both have run their course, that is the end of the ceremonial year and it is time for His second coming. So one very important reason why Leupold's observation is correct has to do with the sanctuary, which is a notion he would reject. We now discuss each of the six clauses.

Clause 1: "to finish transgression"

The verb in clause 1 of Dan 9:24 is *l'kallē* "to restrain." Some Hebrew manuscripts have a closely related verb *l'kallēh* (spelled with *he* rather than *aleph*) "to finish," and in Hebrew the text is traditionally read with this understanding. (The sound would be the same in either case.) Final *aleph* and final *he* paradigms frequently become intermixed with each other over time. So even if we accept the form written with *aleph* as being correct, the *aleph* could stand for *he* by a historical process of substitution, or the reverse. But in fact the best manuscripts, including the famous Leningrad codex on which *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* is based, have *aleph* and it is more economical to assume that *aleph* stands for *aleph* than that *aleph* stands for *he*. So until compelling manuscript evidence becomes available showing that the Leningrad codex preserves an inferior reading, we will have to conclude that the best translation of the verb in clause 1 is "to restrain."

As it happens, the best text also makes the best interpretation. When Christ came "he condemned sin in sinful man [*en tē sarki*, lit. 'in the flesh'], in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3). That is, by taking the same nature we have and living a sinless life in it, He showed that having a fallen nature is not the same as living sinfully. We might otherwise suppose that the two factors were one, but they have been separated for us by Christ's life no less finally or completely than the temple veil was separated at His death (see Matt 27:51). Christ condemned sin in sinful man by becoming a man and living without sin. And yet sin did not just go away when He did that. It is still a problem for the Christian, as we realize only too well. The provision for holy living is there but we must continually avail ourselves of it (see Matt 14:28-31). This is the meaning of the "daily" service.

In the tension between sin, which remains present, and the restraint Christ imposes on it there is insight into the meaning of clause 1. Christ did not destroy sin in sinful man. That is not what Paul says or what he means. He "condemned [*katekrinen*] sin in sinful man" (Rom 8:3). He did this by living above sin, which is the opposite of living above law. He did not do this to enable His followers to do what He could not (i.e., live above law). It is not the case that because Christians are under grace they can do whatever they please. Sin is with us still but in the life of a Christian it is held under restraint by the work of the Holy Spirit, as it was in Christ's life. Otherwise, human sin need not be restrained. What kind of gospel is that?

Clause 2: "to put an end to sin"

Clause 2 does not merely repeat the substance of clause 1. The verb it uses is *ûl'hātēm* "and to seal." This is different from NIV's "put an end to." In saying, "It is finished" (John 19:30), Christ issued a ringing shout of victory. Satan's last hope of success in the great controversy had vanished. "He [Satan] is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short" (Rev 12:12), i.e., he knows that his time is limited. Satan does not have the prospect of developing his evil plans forever. Just as Jesus' life is the guarantee that we will live, His death is the guarantee that Satan will die. While clause 1 has to do with Jesus' life, clause 2 has to do with His death (see Heb 9:26).

Clause 3: "to atone for wickedness"

The death of Christ occurred at a moment in time. It was a punctiliar act. If clause 1 (Christ's life) occurs before clause 2 (His death), it is reasonable to apply clause 3 to a time after Christ's death. If this is how the verse must be applied (and I do not know how else to apply it), then there is a dimension of the atonement which extends beyond the cross, because what clause 3 says is "to atone for wickedness." The literary structure of our passage links the atonement with the ministry of blood. It is not clause 2 which says "to atone for sin" but clause 3. This fact has implications. What is the Holy Spirit trying to tell us about the atonement by saying what He does? We return to clause 3 below. For now it is enough to bear in mind that the predicate "to atone" occurs in clause 3, and that clause 3 follows clause 2.

Clause 4: "to bring in everlasting righteousness"

At this point the first half of the sequence is complete. Heb 7:25 NIV says, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." KJV says "to the uttermost." The Greek is *eis to panteles*, i.e., to the farthest extent of time. Christ always lives and what He does as He lives is minister in the sanctuary, applying the benefits of His death on the cross to each succeeding generation until He returns in glory. That is clause 3. But if clause 3 has already brought us to the farthest extent of time, clause 4 cannot merely continue on from that point. It must go back over the same ground again. Instead of focusing on the bad things that Christ takes away (clauses 1-3), we now focus on the good things that He brings to us (clauses 4-6). This taking and bringing occupies only one period of time. There are not two plans of salvation. Our passage describes it and in doing so the structure of the passage could not be any more simple or clear. As we will see below, it would be difficult to imagine a passage with greater significance for the current sanctuary debate within Adventism.

Paul tells us, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God" (Rom 3:10-11). So when the angel says not only "to bring in righteousness" but "to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan 9:24, clause 4), we can only interpret his words messianically. Righteousness is right doing. By His right doing Christ introduces a righteousness which is not merely from womb to tomb. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). His is an everlasting righteousness in the plenary sense that it extends infinitely far in both directions--from eternity and to eternity. The second series of three clauses (4-6) brings us back once more to the time of Christ's earthly life.

Clause 5: "to seal up vision and prophecy"

Just as "the vision" in Dan 11:14 and throughout the later chapters of Daniel is preeminently the vision of Dan 8, so the "prophecy" in clause 5 of Dan 9:24 is the promise of a coming Savior who would come to live and die for the sins of the world. This theme is stated immediately after the fall ("And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" [Gen 3:15]) and is taken up by faithful prophets in every generation. It is presented "at many times and in various ways" (Heb 1:1). As regards the figure used in Genesis, notice that it does not take long for a snake to

strike. The reference is to the crucifixion. The heel of the woman's Seed (see Gal 3:19) is struck on the cross, at the moment of Christ's death. Nor are two actions depicted. The event that crushes Christ's heel is the same as that which crushes Satan's head. The downward thrust of the heel and the upward thrust of the serpent's strike meet as one at the cross.

Dan 11:22 provides yet another example of this surgical emphasis on a single moment of history. The Hebrew simply says: *w^egam n^egîd b^erît* "and also [the] Prince of [the] covenant" (literal gloss).⁴ During Christ's day a vast number of prominent Romans and others were swept away in a reign of terror under Tiberius Caesar, "and also [the] Prince of [the] covenant."

Here we have insight into Pilate's response when the crowds began to shout, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar" (John 19:12). He gave Jesus over to the mercy of the Jews because he knew what kind of Caesar Tiberius could be if the people actually carried through on their threat to accuse him of not protecting the interests of the Empire. Eventually Pilate's worst fears were realized. He was accused before Caesar on another occasion and summoned to Rome, but Tiberius died before he could try or execute Pilate. Thus, Pilate almost took his own place in Dan 11:22 along with the Prince he executed, as part of the "overwhelming army" (Dan 11:22a) whose deaths were procured by Tiberius. It is a distinction he narrowly missed achieving.

When we read "and also [the] Prince of [the] covenant" in Dan 11:22, what we are reading about is Christ's death at the center of human history. This is also the emphasis in clause 5 of Dan 9:24.

Clause 6: "to anoint the most holy"

If clause 5 describes the moment of Christ's death, clause 6 describes a ministry that occurs afterward. Anointing "the most holy" (clause 6) follows Christ's death and further clarifies what it means "to make an atonement" (clause 3).

Let me be more specific. Clause 6 does not and cannot possibly refer to the anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism. There are at least two reasons for this. First, in the Old Testament the expression *qôdeš q^odāšîm* ("holy of holies") always refers to a place – never a person. And second, as mentioned above, clause 6 follows clause 5. It speaks of events that happen subsequent to Christ's death. There is nothing here about the beginning of His earthly ministry. What we are talking about here is the beginning of His heavenly ministry.

Both parts of clause 6 are of interest--both *w^elimš^oh* "and to anoint" and *qôdeš q^odāšîm* "the most holy." These terms are discussed in a separate section below. Here simply notice that what happens in "the most holy" (clause 6) stands in parallel with the earlier statement "to make an atonement" (clause 3). Thus, unless we take the position that the "most holy" is on earth, the atonement these clauses contemplate takes place in heaven. We return to the term "most holy" below.

More on Clauses 3 and 6

The two clauses which have the greatest significance for Seventh-day Adventist in view of the current sanctuary debate among us are numbers 3 and 6--the ones that describe events after Christ's death. We now focus special attention on these two crucially important parts of Dan 9:24.

Clause 3: "to atone for wickedness"

The idea of atonement needs to be understood much better than it is. There are important biblical examples which can help us if we study them carefully. One of these is the ancient day of atonement as described in Lev 16.

What happened on the "day of atonement" that justifies calling it what we do? Apart from the normal morning and evening sacrifices, which continued being offered then, and the high priest's sacrifice (see Lev 16:3), two goats were selected--the one for the Lord, the other for Azazel (vs. 8). First, the Lord's goat was killed (vs. 15). Then everyone went back to their tents. But wait! They didn't go back quite yet. The blood of the Lord's goat had to be taken into the sanctuary and sprinkled before the mercy seat before any atonement could be made with it. "In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been" (vs. 16). "In this way." In what way? By merely killing the Lord's goat? Or by killing the goat and then presenting its blood to the Lord?

At issue is what it means to atone. Atonement in the Old Testament is never confined to the death of a victim. It always includes ministering the victim's blood. But if what I say is not true, then why was the blood always presented to the Lord in some way--by pouring, or sprinkling, or whatever? Was the act of presenting blood after it was shed extraneous to the process of atonement? If it was, why did the priests always do it? If it was not, what sort of significance did the act have? According to Dan 9:24 clause 3 the presentation of blood--in the antitype that part of the process which took place after the cross--is an absolutely essential part of making an atonement.

Did Christ present His blood (coursing through His own living body) before the Father in the most holy place in heaven at the moment of His death or even on the same day? Not at all. If so, what does He mean the next Sunday morning when He tells Mary, "I have not yet returned to the Father" (John 20:17)? But how could the atonement be complete before He did that? If atonement could be completed with just the shedding of blood, and no ministry, why did the high priest take the blood of the Lord's goat inside the sanctuary on the day of atonement anciently? Was there a reason for this or was it just something the high priest did? If we want didactic passages about the sanctuary, what is this one designed to teach us?

Let us say for argument that Christ's return to heaven after His resurrection is symbolized by the high priest's act of going into the most holy place on the day of atonement, as our critics maintain. Would the atonement encompass more than just His going, but what He does once He gets there? Paul says, "For he himself is our peace" (Eph 2:14), i.e., He Himself is our at-one-ment with the Father. What He does--whatever it is and wherever He does it--is part and parcel of the atonement because it has the function of bringing about the desired at-one-ment. But let us say that I am wrong. The atonement was completed on the cross and nothing more remains to be said. What is Paul trying to tell us when he writes, "And if Christ has

not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor 15:14)? If blood is enough, why did Christ need to rise again? I submit it was so He could minister the benefits of His sacrifice.

No atonement described in the Old Testament was ever considered complete until the blood of the victim had been ministered before the Lord. And how could it possibly be otherwise? If the Lord was the One with whom the sinner was seeking to be reconciled, does it not make sense that the priest would present the blood of the sinner's victim to Him for His approval as the offended party?

The atonement was not complete at the moment of Christ's death. It required His resurrection and subsequent ascension, as Paul says, not to mention His high priestly ministry. But if these things are not necessary, why does Christ portray Himself as a High Priest in Hebrews? What is the epistle talking about? It is not just a question of whether it would be necessary for Christ to minister in both apartments, but whether it would be necessary for Him to minister at all. Our sanctuary theology must be able to answer such questions.

Clause 6: "to anoint the most holy"

Anointing in the Old Testament was always an act of dedication and "to anoint the most holy" (Dan 9:24, clause 6) must therefore mean to dedicate the most holy for service, whatever that is. Here is the setting for Ps 24:7-10 ("Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty--he is the King of glory" [vss. 9-10]). Here Christ is welcomed triumphantly into heaven at His ascension.

So what does it mean that Christ would anoint the most holy [place] upon His ascension to heaven in A.D. 31? Consider once more what the passage says. One term it uses is "most holy." Another is "anoint." Let us not separate these terms. The angel put them together because that is where they belong. What Christ did in the most holy place at His ascension (see Lev 16:15-16)--with all the angels present and singing Ps 24 antiphonally--was an act of dedication or inauguration. Nor did it apply to the most holy place only. The entire service, symbolized by "daily" and yearly components anciently, was being initiated here. So none of this is a substitute for the "daily" service which would occupy many long years of history (see Dan 8:9-12) or the yearly which would take place after 1844 (see Dan 8:13-14). Whereas the cross must focus the entire discussion, that is not all Christ did. It was the venue for shedding blood, but not for ministering it. It would need to be ministered at a later time and in a different place. Let us follow Christ in every facet of His work (see John 10:11) and not sit in judgment on Him by deciding which aspects of what He does are important.

Discussion

Christ's holy life is entirely unique in history. In that sense it is an isolated fact. But it cannot be considered an isolated fact in the additional sense that it has no implications for mankind. To think so constitutes the heresy of Pelagius. The special genius of Pelagius' theory is not that man can obey God, but rather that a person's actions have no bearing on anyone but himself. Thus, Adam's sin is self-contained leaving his physical progeny unaffected, to which the natural corollary is that Christ's holiness is self-contained leaving His spiritual progeny

unaffected. But Pelagius was wrong. Adam's one act of sin affected all mankind. And by the same logic Christ's one act of righteousness affects all mankind--i.e., all who will allow themselves to be affected by it.⁵ By living the life that He did in human flesh, and by going out of His way to take human flesh in order to do so (as if to prove a point), Christ was illustrating a principle which requires application. Otherwise, He was not illustrating a broader principle but was merely demonstrating His own ability to obey God's law.

Such a position bears no relation to the gospel Paul preached (see Gal 1:8). The assertion that God (in the person of His Son) is holy, taken by itself, is a death warrant, because we are not. If this is the only thing God has to say to mankind through His Son, He would not need to have said it twice. On Sinai God had already told us He is holy. So we knew that. But through Christ God is telling us something more. The point He was making by living on earth as a human being has to do with real men and women. It has to do with us. What God is saying by such means is that through Christ we also can live holy lives (see Heb 12:14). The gospel is not the assurance that we can live any way we want and be saved regardless. Rather it is the assurance that we can be saved from our sins (see Matt 1:21).

Nor is the gospel a mechanism God uses to transform sin into something more acceptable. What makes it unacceptable to God in the first place is that it separates us from Him. It is an act of separation because--committed intelligently--it is an act of rejection. To say that He can bring about an atonement by conferring permanence on what separates us from Him, or by accepting the principle on which we reject Him, is nonsense. The sinner must be separated from his sin for the process of saving him to operate successfully. The gospel does not make sin holy; it makes sinners holy. What Christ's life demonstrates--irreversibly--is that no one who shares the same human nature He had and accepts Him into his life as Lord and Savior is under any necessity of being "controlled by the sinful nature" (Rom 8:8). Otherwise, we does have an excuse. What is it?

Conclusion

I submit that making an atonement always involves the ministry of blood and is never limited to the shedding of blood alone. That is why there were priests in the ancient sanctuary. The sinner himself took the victim's life. If shedding blood were all that's involved, there would have been no need for priests. Someone had to minister the blood once it was shed. Both acts were required but of the two, it was especially the ministering of it that gave sacrificial blood its atoning value. This fact takes nothing away from Christ's sacrifice on the cross, because He is the Priest as well as the Victim. Christ alone makes atonement for us, but the ramifications of the process extend both before and after the pivotal moment of His death. I do not seek to minimize Christ's all-important death but rather to magnify the One who died by showing the significance of what doing so enables Him to accomplish.

When the benefits of a given sacrifice were applied in the Old Testament, they were applied to an individual, or group of individuals. That is how the benefits of the sacrifice became beneficial. Thus, the process of making atonement was an ongoing one precisely because in every generation there were those who required its benefits. The sacrifice was not repeated in Christ's case, but the work of applying it to individuals must be ongoing (this is the "daily" of Dan 8:11), culminating eventually in the day of atonement (see Dan 8:14). This does not mean that Christ's death on the cross was ineffective. On the contrary, because His death was

perfectly and entirely effective there is no need to repeat it endlessly. The benefits of what He accomplished on the cross can be extended to believers in every age because of their faith in that one all-sufficient sacrifice (see Heb 7:25). The response of faith cannot be omitted as unnecessary. While Christ's death was a unilateral act, that does not change the fact that if two parties have become estranged, both of them must be reconciled (see 2 Cor 5:20). And why would we not want to be?

There is no way to keep the atonement unsullied by contact with human need. Until it is applied in actual cases it has not accomplished its objective. Christ cleanses us from impurity and sin by taking these things on Himself.⁶ He did this on the cross. And yet the moment must come when the abstract truth about what Christ accomplished for us there becomes a living reality and touches people. It must have its effect on sinners or it will have no effect at all. The salvation Christ provides has saving value only as it saves individual sinners. In every case this will prove to be messy business but it is the very work the sanctuary was designed to perform.

We end by repeating that "the most holy" is something in heaven. It is not on earth. And second, the clause which speaks of it (#6) stands in parallel with one which says "to atone for wickedness" (#3). From these two clauses I draw that the meaning of atonement in the antitype is such that the place where it happens is primarily heaven and the time when it happens is primarily after the cross.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), Vol. 9: *Ezekiel, Daniel*, pp. 340-41.

²*Ibid.*, p. 341.

³Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949), p. 411.

⁴Notice that Christ is here portrayed as "the prince of the covenant" (Dan 11:22) rather than "the Prince of the host" (Dan 8:11). The host is a host of angels, the covenant is a covenant with mankind. Thus, in chap. 8 Christ is shown in relation to heavenly beings as their Commander and in chap. 11 He is shown in relation to earthly beings as their Savior. Notice the angel's choice of words on both occasions. In Dan 8:11 the word translated "Prince" is *śar*--a greater prince (see also Josh 5:14, 15), while in Dan 11:22 it is *nāgîd*--a lesser prince. Here we have insight into the vexed question of what Christ meant when He said that "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). On earth, as a man, in relation to fallen mankind, He assumed a lesser role (see Phil 2:6-8). In heaven, both before and after the incarnation, He shares the glory of the Father (see John 17:5). The cross is not a pantomime. Something is given up in the incarnation that will never be regained. And yet Christ shares the Father's throne once more, receiving the praise and worship of the entire universe.

⁵Unlike physical birth, spiritual birth is voluntary. We have no choice in being born, but we do have a choice in being reborn.

⁶The principle illustrated by any kind of cleansing is the same. One object (a cloth or whatever) cleans another object by taking whatever is unwanted on itself. Let the one who feels that defilement does not result from cleansing clean his shoes with a new handkerchief that he values.