

5. Jesus, Our High Priest

Texts: Hebrews 5 and 7; John 12:44, 45; 14:5-10.

Quotes:

- Priests are only men. Robert Browning.
- By education most have been misled; So they believe, because they were bred.
The priest continues where the nurse began, And thus the child imposes on the man.
John Dryden.
- As a priest, a piece of mere church furniture at best. William Cowper.
- Once a priest, always a priest. Proverb.
- Because religious training means credulity training, churches should not be surprised to find that so many of their congregations accept astrology as readily as theology, or a channeled Atlantean priest as readily as a biblical prophet. Barbara G. Walker
- The priests of one religion never credit the miracles of another religion. Is this because priests instinctively know priests? Robert Ingersoll.
- That church teaches us that we can make God happy by being miserable ourselves; that a nun is holier in the sight of God than a loving mother with her child in her thrilled and thrilling arms; that a priest is better than a father... Robert Ingersoll.

Introductory questions

What is so significant in identifying with Jesus as our high priest? If this element of Christ's ministry was not there, in what way would it be diminished? In what way does Jesus act as our high priest, and what is the meaning of what he does? What does Jesus mean when he says he will NOT pray the Father for us? How does this clear statement impact priestly ministry?

Discussion ideas

How would you define the primary function of a priest? What is a priestly ministry? The main idea common to all religious ideas of priests is to provide connection to the divine, to be the intermediary between God and man.

But if Jesus is God, how does he be this mediator? Another meaning of the word to mediate is to provide concepts and information, to be the one who supplies answers to questions. Unfortunately mediate all too often means to arbitrate between warring parties. How would such a view fit our relationship with God? And if Jesus is our High Priest, what does this mean in concept and practice?

Much of what we appreciate about Jesus as our High Priest will depend on what role we think he is performing. So it is absolutely essential to grasp what Hebrews is saying about this. However Paul notes that his statement (Heb. 5:8-10) is hard to explain—and what comes subsequently is his explanation. In fact he is hard on his hearers, commenting on their dullness, and wishing they would not endlessly go over the same simple matters of basic Christianity and move towards a better and larger understanding. Really one needs to read the chapters 5 through 7 as a whole to see the concept Paul is establishing. The main thesis is: "For it is declared: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.' The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by

which we draw near to God.” Heb 7:17-19 NIV. Entrance to God is the primary perspective. (See also 6:19, 20 “Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.”)

Ellen White Comments on Jesus our High Priest

Jesus cares for each one as though there were not another individual on the face of the earth. As Deity He exerts mighty power in our behalf, while as our Elder Brother He feels for all our woes. The Majesty of heaven held not Himself aloof from degraded, sinful humanity. We have not a high priest who is so high, so lifted up, that He cannot notice us or sympathize with us, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. {AG 78.5}

All who are followers of Christ should deal with one another exactly as we wish the Lord to deal with us in our errors and weaknesses; for we are all erring, and need his pity and forgiveness. Jesus consented to take human nature, that he might know how to pity, and how to plead with his Father in behalf of sinful, erring mortals. He volunteered to become man’s advocate, and he humiliated himself to become acquainted with the temptations wherewith man was beset, that he might succor those who should be tempted, and be a tender and faithful high priest. {GW92 94.1}

In Christ divinity and humanity were united, and the only way in which man may be an overcomer is through becoming a partaker of the divine nature. . . . Divinity and humanity are blended in him who has the spirit of Christ. The apostle Paul writes, “In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.” . . . “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” {SD 24.4}

Jesus cares for each one as though there were not another individual on the face of the earth. As Deity He exerts mighty power in our behalf, while as our Elder Brother He feels for all our woes. The Majesty of heaven held not Himself aloof from degraded, sinful humanity. We have not a high priest who is so high, so lifted up, that He cannot notice us or sympathize with us, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. {5T 346.1}

Extra material

“In every country and every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot ... they have perverted the purest religion ever preached to man into mystery and jargon, unintelligible to all mankind, and therefore the safer engine for their purpose.” Thomas Jefferson to Horatio Spafford, March 17, 1814.

“The priesthood have, in all ancient nations, nearly monopolized learning. And ever since the Reformation, when or where has existed a Protestant or dissenting sect who would tolerate A FREE INQUIRY? The blackest billingsgate, the most ungentlemanly insolence, the most yahooish brutality, is patiently endured, countenanced, propagated, and applauded. But touch a solemn truth in collision with a dogma of a sect, though capable of the clearest proof, and you will find you have disturbed a nest, and the hornets will swarm about your eyes and hand, and fly into your face and eyes.” John Adams letter to John Taylor.

“It [slavery] has exercised absolute mastery over the American Church. . . . With the Bible in their hands, her priesthood have attempted to prove that slavery came down from God out of heaven. They have become slaveholders and dealers in human flesh.” William Lloyd Garrison, abolitionist leader

6. Sanctuary Language in Hebrews

Texts: Hebrews 3, 4 and 9; Luke 18:9-14.

Quotes

- It is an equal failing to trust everybody, and to trust nobody. *English Proverb*
- Trust, but verify. *Ronald Reagan*. Love all, trust a few. *William Shakespeare*
- Trust everybody, but cut the cards. *Finley Peter Dunne*
- What loneliness is more lonely than distrust? *George Eliot*
- Mistrust begets mistrust. Trust begets accomplishment. *Lao Tsu*

Introductory questions

Which sanctuary is the copy? Why do we persist in defining the heavenly sanctuary by the earthly? What was the sanctuary meant to do? Of what value is “sanctuary language” to people in the 21st century? How does Hebrews speak to us today—like the Jewish Christians who were having such a hard time reconciling what they knew from the past with the present? Most of all, what is the sanctuary designed to accomplish in our relationship to God?

Discussion ideas

Unfortunately the lesson quarterly does not cover chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews, though it repeatedly covers chapters 8-10 (the subject material for lessons 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10). In order to ensure coverage of these important chapters, we are including them in this lesson.

One question raised by a class participant was how to read Hebrews in a less legalistic way. One useful practice is to use more than one version. For example, using J.B. Phillips’ translation of Hebrews 3 is a great help since he uses the concept of “not giving up trust” instead of the term “unbelief.” This points to the centrality of trusting God in the whole of Hebrews, and gives a greater insight—since we can perhaps more readily understand the importance of trust, while unbelief can be seen simply as a refusal to operate according to statements of belief or dogma.

Paul in Hebrews is trying to use the old imagery and make it relevant and applicable. What he is saying is that the old methods were not wrong, just misunderstood and now superseded. Even the sacrificial system did not achieve what God had intended, because it was so often seen as some routine ritual by which the problem of sin was taken care of. That is why God through the later prophets actually speaks against the system, because it had become meaningless. This is a vital aspect of Hebrews, and which is still applicable today: our worship systems must make an impact, must make us think. If there is no thought, then worship becomes just a form, a ceremony, with no real content. Paul is actually saying through Hebrews that the old ways really didn’t work, and only make sense in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus—and since Jesus is God then we have direct access to God himself—the priesthood as a system is also gone.

The sanctuary is primarily designed to encourage our faith and confidence in God—in other words, to develop our trust.

Extra Material: A Question of Trust

Strange how we use words, isn’t it? “I trust you are well this morning.” “The money will be kept in trust.” “The National Trust.” “The US Senate has voted anti-trust legislation.”

None of these ways of using the word **trust** in the way I want. The real nature of trust goes far deeper. Especially when we think of our relationship to God.

I remember being stranded once in Paris, and in the end finding a kindly French student who let me sleep on his floor. In the middle of the night I was woken by him moving around the room where I was sleeping. I saw him lock up his desk, and then go back to his bedroom.

Next morning he asked if he had disturbed me. No, I said. Then he said, "I'm sorry. But as I was going to sleep I remembered I had a lot of money in my desk drawer. And so I got up to lock the desk. As I didn't know you I wasn't sure what you might do. I didn't know if I could trust you." He was profuse with his apologies, but he was quite right. It really is *not* wise to trust total strangers—or even people you think you know quite well.

So can you be trusted?" Added to that question, another vital one: Do you trust God?

Luke 18:9-14 Jesus often told stories to get people thinking. So imagine Jesus is telling you this story. Look at the audience: those who thought they were good, who thought they were right with God, who looked down on others.

v.11,12. How does the self-righteous man pray? Well, he is convinced of his own goodness. He *knows* he's better than the rest. He is comparing himself with those around him. He's basically saying, "God, look at me. Look how good I am. Look at all the pious work I do. That must count for something, right? This means I'm in credit with you, and you *owe* me." How does this man think of God? What is his 'God-image'?

He sees God as being *demanding*. Saying "You'd better do this or else." He sees God as a *score keeper*, checking up on our activities like a nosey neighbor. Above all he sees God as an *angry Being to be appeased* through unthinking obedience. It is very clear from even these few words that the Pharisee sees God in a very negative way. For him the matter of a *relationship* with God is not the real point. It is a question of bargaining with God: if I do this and that, then God has to do his part. This is a *contractual* arrangement—in return for doing all these things then God has to bless me and let me into heaven.

I remember studying with a man once who when we came to the matter of tithe-paying suddenly became defensive. "Ah, I *knew* there was a catch to this," he concluded. I shared with him Malachi 3, about opening the storehouses of heaven etc. So he said he'd think about it. Next time I visited he was very down. He told me he'd decided to pay tithe, but that it wasn't working.

"What do you mean, it isn't working," I asked him.

"I haven't got anything back yet," he said glumly.

Maybe he thought you got a better interest rate from the Bank of Heaven, Inc! Obviously he still hadn't seen what God's blessings were really all about...

v.13,14. So what about the tax collector? He didn't even come near to the Temple. He was very conscious of what he was. He had no self-righteousness. And he was aware of his condition in God's eyes. What does he ask from God? No returns on tithe paying. No credit for fasting. No words of appreciation from a satisfied God that he wasn't greedy, or dishonest, or an adulterer. (Interesting how that came up in the Pharisees prayer—maybe a subconscious indication of the thoughts of his heart!). Nothing of any of this. All he asked God for was mercy. For God to have pity on him. In other words, for God to help him.

That's right where we *all* should be. Not going to God all proud, but acknowledging our faults and asking for God's help. For only this can really end our sin problems. Who went home *right with God* (which is what 'justified' means)? The one who had restored his *relationship* with a loving, merciful God. Not the one who was trying to do some pious business with a negative and demanding God. Why? Because the tax collector *trusted* God. He trusted in what God could do for him, to change him and to remake him. That's the relationship God wants with all of us.

7. Jesus and the Covenant

Texts: Hebrews 8 and 9.

Quotes and Definitions

- I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise. Doctrines and Covenants 82:10 (Mormon).
- Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me. Qur'an, sura 2:40.
- The ancient covenant is in pieces; man at last knows that he is alone in the universe's unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged only by chance. His destiny is nowhere spelled out, nor is his duty. The kingdom above or the darkness below: it is for him to choose. Jacques Monod
- Democracy, the practice of self-government, is a covenant among free men to respect the rights and liberties of their fellows. Franklin D. Roosevelt
- **Covenant.** A clause in a contract that requires one party to do, or refrain from doing, certain things. A legally binding arrangement between parties: agreement, bond, compact, contract, convention, pact. A formal, solemn, and binding agreement in which all parties pledge themselves to the others. It outlines mutual obligations and responsibilities.

Introductory questions

What is the purpose of a covenant? Why do we have covenants? Does it help us to know that God has made a covenant with us, or can we simply trust a trustworthy God? What is the down side to a covenant in human terms? What does an emphasis on, and demand for, a covenant say about us?

Discussion ideas

A couple of quarters ago we spent much time thinking about covenants in the Bible. Again, it is supremely significant to consider what kind of meaning we give to words like covenant. Is our relationship to God contractually-based, or is it more a question of principles?

Covenants are especially helpful for suspicious people. It provides some kind of guarantee, rather than simply trusting others to do the right and honorable thing. Trouble is, if we are doubtful or suspicious of God, and so want the covenant, what does that say about us and our relationship with God? Perhaps it is simply better to use the meaning of covenant as promises (see the EGW quotes) so that we do not become sidetracked by the contractual obligations concept.

What kind of covenant is being described in Hebrews 8 anyway? Paul is quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-34—which in itself is interesting, for it shows that the “new” covenant is not so new after all! And what is the intent of this new covenant? It is clearly defined as *not* being like the previous covenant. It is to be based not on legal formulations and prescriptions, but on laws in minds and hearts—in other words, a relational covenant based on doing right because it is right, and is so recognized and accepted by thinking people. The intent, says God, is “that they will all know me.” This is not some ceremonial relationship, but one of individual, personal trust.

Ellen White Comments on Jesus and the Covenant

...the covenant of blessing, the glorious Messianic promise... {GC 18.2} ...the covenant promises... {PP 476.1} ...the covenant of grace... {1SM 373.1} ...the covenant of peace... {3SM 260.3}

We must learn in the school of Christ. Nothing but His righteousness can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. We have long desired and tried to obtain these blessings but have not received them because we have cherished the idea that we could do something to make ourselves worthy of them. We have not looked away from ourselves, believing that Jesus is a living Saviour. We must not think that our own grace and merits will save us; the grace of Christ is our only hope of salvation. {FW 36.1}

There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today. . . . Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the author and the finisher of our faith. {FLB 77.6}

God Made Manifest

Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant..." Mal. 3:1-3. {DA 161.1}

Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented. Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,--to set men right through the revelation of God... When the object of his mission was attained,--the revelation of God to the world,--the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890}

Extra material The God of Promise

The more you read of the kind of person God truly is, the less you have to be fearful of Him. In the Bible, God comes to human beings, and the first words are, "Don't be afraid!" Why not? Because this returning God is not a stranger. "This same Jesus shall return..." the angels told the amazed disciples who watched Jesus leave earth for heaven. This same Jesus is defined in the gospels, and is the proof of God as He really is—the God of love and truth and right, who will save all who come to Him. Ultimately, perfect love casts out fear...

What kind of God makes the promise, and do you trust him? Like everything else in life, it depends on your relationship, and the person's record. Take a look back through the Bible and you'll find example upon example of how God deals with people just like us. More than that, the Bible records God's intentions which history shows came true. Prophecy as it fulfils is another guarantee that God is "working his purpose out," and that He can be trusted. So when Jesus says "I will come again," (John 14:3), you're certainty is based on all the proof of God through history.

So, "we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure," and "therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold." (Hebrews 6:19 NIV, 2 Corinthians 3:12 NIV).

The assurance is not based in the covenant, but in the one who promises—and he is faithful that promised! (Hebrews 10:23).

8. Jesus and the Sanctuary

Texts: Hebrews 8 and 9.

Quotes:

- They [the Israelites] had drifted so far away that they could not comprehend how God could live with them, being-invisible, so God said, “Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” (Ex. 25:8) The pillar of cloud above the tabernacle and God’s visible presence manifested within, helped the Israelites more easily to comprehend the real abiding presence of the Lord with them. Stephen Haskell.
- The Sanctuary was the heart of the typical system. There the Lord placed his name, manifested his glory, and held converse with the High Priest, relative to the welfare of Israel. O.R.L. Crozier.

Introductory questions

What is important about “which sanctuary”? What is the main emphasis in these chapters? Are there any dangers in becoming too detailed in our analysis of the sanctuary? What is the role of Jesus in the sanctuary, and how does the book of Hebrews enlighten this? What is the essential meaning of “the sanctuary message”? How is it relevant today?

Discussion ideas

The lesson (Thurs. p98 teachers) clearly identifies the inability of the sanctuary system to “work,” as does Paul in Hebrews. “The function of the earthly was limited in efficiency, as well as in time. Its service was not able to solve the sin problem. The shedding of blood was without lasting effect. The human conscience was not really cleansed.”

If this is so, why did God institute the system? Is it not because at least there was so way in which believers might catch a glimpse of what God could do? And is it not the same for us today? Can we not become as preoccupied with the system and all the procedures and fail to see the God who wants us to come to him for healing salvation? Even Paul refuses to get into sanctuary-ology—see Hebrews 9:5.

The danger in looking too much at the sanctuary is that we spend our time on the symbols and the practices, and don’t see God. For as is so often mentioned yet so little practiced, the sanctuary was a picture book, a teaching device, an illustration to help an illiterate band of wanderers the fundamental truths about God and salvation.

So instead of asking the interpretation of every piece of furniture, let us ask what insights into the nature and character of God are provided by the sanctuary. This is exactly what Paul is doing in Hebrews, so it is hardly off-topic! He says that the Holy Spirit was showing us (9:8), and then concludes: “The ceremonies are concerned with food and drink, various washings and rules for bodily conduct, and were only intended to be valid until the time when Christ should establish the truth.” (Hebrews 9:10 Phillips). In other words, they were teaching tools on the way to truth, but they were not the truth. Jesus is the truth—and what is the truth he came to reveal? The full truth about God, and the solution of the issues in the Great Controversy, and how he could save us from ourselves. It is only from that perspective that the sanctuary makes sense.

Ellen White Comments on Jesus and the Sanctuary

Jesus knew that whatever was presented that was out of harmony with what he came to earth to unfold, was false and delusive. But he said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." [JOHN 18:37.] Having stood in the counsels of God, having dwelt in the everlasting heights of the sanctuary, all elements of truth were in him, and of him; for he was one with God. {Review and Herald, Dec. 1, 1891.}

While Jesus ministers in the true sanctuary above, He is through His Holy Spirit working through His earthly messengers. {CH 545.1}

In the balances of the sanctuary, the gifts of the poor, made from love to Christ, are not estimated according to the amount given, but according to the love which prompts the sacrifice. The promises of Jesus will as surely be realized by the liberal poor man, who has but little to offer, but who gives that little freely, as by the wealthy man who gives of his abundance. 3T 398, 399. {CS 180.1}

"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. Though the ministration was to be removed from the earthly to the heavenly temple; though the sanctuary and our great high priest would be invisible to human sight, yet the disciples were to suffer no loss thereby. They would realize no break in their communion, and no diminution of power because of the Saviour's absence. While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth. He is withdrawn from the eye of sense, but His parting promise is fulfilled, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20. While He delegates His power to inferior ministers, His energizing presence is still with His church. {DA 166.2}

Jesus is our Saviour today. He is pleading for us in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, and he will forgive our sins. It makes all the difference in the world with us spiritually whether we rely upon God without doubt, as upon a sure foundation, or whether we are seeking to find some righteousness in ourselves before we come to him. Look away from self to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. {GW92 426.3}

Extra material

Jesus' ministry in the sanctuary should not be seen as contradicting his clearest statement where he says he will "tell you plainly about the Father... I need make no promise to plead to the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you." John 16:25, 26 Phillips. His disciples are delighted to hear such truths, and cry out, "Now you are speaking plainly." (v.29).

If the plainest, clearest truth is that Jesus is not pleading for us, what do we do with such ideas that Jesus is pleading with the Father for us? Actually, Hebrews does not say that. It does say (9:24) that he entered heaven "to appear for us." (NIV). But we do not have the image of him begging the Father to be nice to us, trying to persuade God to do anything other than he already intended. To say otherwise would be to split the trinity, to set the Godhead against each other.

The danger of the sanctuary message, misunderstood, is to suggest that Jesus (the good God) has to battle with the Father (the angry and hostile God) in order to achieve our salvation. In this way we reflect the charges of Satan who condemned God for being hostile and unforgiving, an unloving and vengeful Being who took pleasure in vindictive punishment of erring creatures. We would do well to totally reject such a picture. It was not to induce love in the Father's heart that Jesus came and died, but because of the Father's love!

9. Jesus' Ministry and the Sanctuary

Texts: Hebrews 9 and 10.

Quotes:

- “What is the foundation of your faith?” If asked that question, a Seventh-day Adventist today might respond, “Jesus Christ, of course!” or “The Bible,” or even “Our special lifestyle.” But our earliest pioneers would no doubt declare, “The sanctuary and the 2300 days!” P. Gerard Damsteegt.
- There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. SDA Fundamental Beliefs, 23.
- Stephen’s vision refutes the Adventist claim which is central to their entire system of theology: that Jesus ministered in the holy place of the sanctuary until 1844. Radek Dobias.

Introductory questions

How does the Day of Atonement affect us today? What can we learn from Jesus’ ministry in the sanctuary? What does the sanctuary tell us about God and his intentions to us? Historically, the sanctuary message has been very significant to us. Why? Is it important to continue this, and how is it best portrayed? How does all this affect our picture of God? What does atonement really mean?

Discussion ideas

The Day of Atonement is climax of the sanctuary rituals—the annual event during which the sanctuary was “cleansed.” It has great significance in pointing to the consummation of history and the final disposition of sin and evil, as well as to the role of Jesus in healing and saving all those who trust in him.

But what actually does atonement mean? Was it in the sense of making a payment to avoid offence, to make amends for some mistaken action? The original meaning of atonement is not this contractual bargain, but is truly the making one—the “at-oneing” that is so essential in a separation or estrangement. In fact, the concept of making payment is itself offensive to true atonement, for to become at one, or in harmony, requires far more than some transaction or deal. True atonement goes to the heart, and is based on a willingness to be restored, to be changed, to be healed. And that is what God is really trying to teach us through the Atonement—that there is “a way back to God from the dark paths of sin,” that there can be true restoration and we can be treated as if we had never sinned.

God gave himself to us—that is the meaning of Jesus’ life and death—and the sacrifice is not to pay off a pagan-style deity but to be the means by which we can be saved, as part of God’s answer to the universe over the issues in the Great Controversy. In fact Hebrews makes this crystal clear: “After saying that God has ‘no pleasure in sacrifice, offering and burnt-offering’ (which are made according to the Law), Christ then says, ‘Lo, I am come to do thy will.’” Hebrews 10:6, 7 Phillips. It cost God so much, but it was not to pay himself off!

Ellen White Comments

The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." {CW 30.2}

We are in the antitypical day of atonement, and not only are we to humble our hearts before God and confess our sins, but we are, by all our educating talent, to seek to instruct those with whom we are brought in contact, and to bring them by precept and example to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. {CE 157.1}

Shall we not strive to discern the meaning of the atonement of Christ? {RH, February 14, 1899 par. 14}

Our people do not appreciate as they should the saving power of the atonement. They do not understand as they should the meaning of the words, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Letter 175, 1904, p. 3. (To Ministers and Teachers, May 21, 1904.) {12MR 61.3}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters. Letter 406, 1906. {6BC 1074}

"...the remedial sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who is our atonement—at-one-ment with God." {6BC 1077}

The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; and it was not made to produce a love which was not in existence; but it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God's heart, an exponent of the divine favor in the sight of the heavenly intelligences, in the sign of worlds unfallen, and in the sight of a fallen race.... We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us, but that He so loved us that He have His only-begotten Son to die for us. {Signs of the Times, May 30, 1893}

Extra material

"But we have been baptized(washed, John 13:10), reconciled, united with Christ as members of his Body, thereby the root of sin, which is the pride and self-love of the ego, has been extracted, and the process of healing from the bottom initiated. Thus we share in the righteousness of Christ; and here we must banish any notion of a legal or forensic imputation of merit, for we are justified and made righteous, not in the sense of possessing a righteousness all our own (Phil. 3:9), but because we belong to Christ." (*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, A. Richardson ed., p.26).

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary describes the word atonement: "the condition of being at one with others; concord, agreement." There is no concept here of some necessary paying of penalty, of appeasement or placating a hostile person. It is simply "one-ness". The same source gives a further definition: "3. Spec. in Theol. Reconciliation or restoration between God and sinners. 1526 (Tyndale)." and then adds the note "Atonement is variously used by theologians in the sense of reconciliation, propitiation, expiation. (Not so applied in any version of the N.T.)"—an interesting "theological" comment from a work not particularly concerned with matters religious!