

A Biblical Evaluation of O. R. L. Crosier's View of Atonement

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Abstract

The idea of when Jesus does His atonement has been a discussion between Protestants and Seventh-day Adventists. Evangelicals have thought that Adventists do not believe that the cross is a complete atonement of God. This question was raised in 1957 and Adventists answered it through Questions on Doctrine. This question, once believed by some Adventist pioneers, has its foundation in the writing of O.R.L. Crosier. This article aims to answer biblically why Crosier's idea is rejected in this denomination. Using the word study of "atonement," this work argues that the biblical idea of atonement involves the sacrifice and the application of the high priest in the sanctuary. The Old and New Testaments embrace the concept that Jesus died on Calvary and His application ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as atonement. The reason for Crosier's limited perception of atonement since he focused on the work of the priest and was not on the overall idea of atonement in the Bible.

Keywords: *atonement, O. R. L. Crosier, sanctuary, Day of Atonement, Adventist pioneers*

Introduction

The doctrine of sanctuary is an important doctrine for Seventh-day Adventist theology. Since the beginning of Seventh-day Adventist, this concept has played a significant role in understanding other doctrines. Early Sabbatarian Adventists believed that the concept of sanctuary was an integrating principle that connected their doctrines. Joseph Bates described the fulfillment of the typology within the sanctuary as the "perfect, harmonious, and complete" understanding of truth.¹ James White viewed the doctrine of the sanctuary "as one of the most important, beautiful and harmonious subject that can, at present time, engage the mind of man." He furthermore believed that in it "all the great columns of the present truth center; and our system of truth forever remain unshaken while this citadel stands."² Ellen G. White, one of the co-founders of this

¹ Joseph Bates, *A Vindication of the Seventh-Day Sabbath and the Commandments of God: With a Further History of God's Peculiar People from 1847 to 1848* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1848), 208.

² James White, "The Sanctuary," *Review and Herald [RH]*, December 1, 1863, 4, 5.

denomination,³ stated that the concept of the sanctuary “was the key. . . to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, and revealed present duty as it brought to light the position and work of God’s people.”⁴ Thus, Bates and the Whites have united in their assessment that the sanctuary doctrine was the defining and unifying belief to understand Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

For Seventh-day Adventists, atonement was one of the important elements of teachings in the doctrine of sanctuary. It appears in the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church number twenty-four that says, “There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross.”⁵ In this sense, the Adventists believe that the ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is a continuation of what He has done on Calvary. The Adventists think that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, “God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator.”⁶ In this understanding, now days, the Adventists suggest that the atonement happened on the cross to reconcile “the world to God” and its application for the benefit of the believers is done by Jesus through His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.⁷

However, Owen Russel Loomis (O. R. L.) Crosier, the first among Sabbatarian Adventists who wrote then edited “the two-phase atonement in the heavenly sanctuary”⁸ stated that the atonement did not happen on the cross but exclusively happened after He ascended to heaven. He believed the atonement on the Calvary is “unsupported by Divine authority.”⁹ This view was supported by some Adventist pioneers. J. N. Andrews supposed that the death of Christ on the Cross was the sacrifice for the sins¹⁰ but the atonement happened in the ministration of Christ in His heavenly sanctuary.¹¹ Uriah Smith had a similar idea that the death of Jesus opened a new way to His ministry in heavenly sanctuary services.¹² Smith thought that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross “was to be ministered for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and there from henceforth, the world was to look for salvation and pardon.”¹³ Therefore, regarding the atonement, Uriah Smith suggested that Jesus Christ started it in the Holy Place and continued it to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary at the end of 2300 evenings and mornings.¹⁴ For this

³ The other co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were Joseph Bates and James White. Jean Rudolf Zurcher, *Touched with our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 32.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1884) 4: 258.

⁵ The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 351.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 121. Adventist fundamental believe number 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 353-355.

⁸ Alberto R. Timm, “Owen Russell Loomis Crosier (or Crozier),” *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 355.

⁹ Owen Russel Loomis Crosier, “The Law of Moses,” *The Day-Star Extra*, January 9, 1846, 41.

¹⁰ J. N. Andrews, “The Cleansing of the Sanctuary,” *RH*, February 21, 1856, 165.

¹¹ J. N. Andrews, “The Sanctuary,” *RH*, February 3, 1853, 146.

¹² Uriah Smith, “The Sanctuary of the New Covenant,” *RH*, October 2, 1856, 172.

¹³ Uriah Smith, “The Sanctuary,” *RH*, March 28, 1854, 78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

reason, Uriah Smith believed that the cross was a sacrifice for the later atonement work that Jesus would start since his ascension to heaven. In this understanding, Smith considered the heavenly sanctuary as the starting point of atonement.

The writing of Crosier regarding atonement influenced some important leaders of the Sabbatarian Adventists¹⁵ such as J. N. Andrews and Uriah Smith even after he left this group in 1847.¹⁶ Since Crosier's view that the atonement was started in the heavenly sanctuary and not on the cross influenced some Adventist leaders, many Christians saw that the Adventist pioneers despised the significance of the cross to the atonement.¹⁷

Since Crosier was the first among the Sabbatarian Adventists who wrote about Christ's atonement in the heavenly sanctuary, his view influenced some key leaders of Adventist pioneers. This idea was seen by other Christians as a representative of Seventh-day Adventists doctrine. Even though, nowadays, Seventh-day Adventists understand His ministry is to apply the atonement that Jesus has made on the cross, there are some who think that Crosier's idea still prevails in the Seventh-day Adventists. Thus, this study evaluates Crosier's view about the atonement which started in the heavenly sanctuary and how he came up with such an idea.

Method

This article uses documentary research to collect the data. The analysis of the data employs two methods. The introduction, background, and description of Crosier's idea utilize a historical-theological approach. The biblical evaluation of Crosier's view of the atonement uses word study of Hebrew and Greek.

Discussion

The Background of Crosier's View on Atonement

The understanding of the early Sabbatarian Adventists regarding atonement did not come up in a vacuum. The development idea on this topic, in one or another way, has some connection with the Christian circumstances that sprang up in that time. Even though the understanding of atonement in Christ's death among Christians is still debated,¹⁸ in this section, the general understanding of Christianity is limited only to the nineteenth century in America and among Millerites. It provides the background of the early Sabbatarian Adventists' concept of atonement.

The Concept of Atonement in 19th Century in America

There were several concepts that appeared in the nineteenth century in America regarding atonement. The early theory of atonement in New England could be traced in the view of Jonathan Edwards and some of his contemporaries who believed in "the

¹⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, rev. ed., (1996), s.v. "Atonement."

¹⁶ Timm, *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 355.

¹⁷ Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist belief* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 341.

¹⁸ Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.

substitutionary-penal view, emphasized that by his death Christ paid the penalty for sin to which humans were liable.”¹⁹ It was strictly Calvinism since it stressed “the holiness and righteousness of God and, consequently, the seriousness of humanity’s sinful state.” The next view on atonement was the governmental view. The rationale of this idea was “to demonstrate the seriousness of sin by showing the extremity of God’s action in putting his Son to death.”²⁰ Another idea of atonement in America was the moral influence theory. The view acknowledged two influences of the atonement of Christ. The first was if “we recognized that Christ’s suffering and death were innocent and, on our account, we are moved to a conviction of sin.” It meant “the effect of Christ’s death is primarily on human beings.”²¹ The second influence of the atonement was “to remove God’s resentment toward humanity and facilitate his forgiveness.”²² The other understanding of atonement in this century was the example theory. This view believed that human beings were not corrupted at all after falling into sin, thus, “humanity does not need a moral and spiritual transformation or regeneration, but a living example of virtue and righteousness.”²³ An example could be seen in “the death of Jesus Christ.”²⁴ These were the concepts of atonement in North America in the emergence of the Advent movement and Sabbatarian Adventists.

Among those four views on the atonement, only the substitutionary penal agreed that the atonement happened on the cross.²⁵ The other three views see the death of Christ as an important event but not as the atonement sacrifice of Jesus. The governmental view assumes that the death of Christ is “an offering made to God and a demonstration of divine justice” and denied its atonement aspect.²⁶ The moral influence view of atonement emphasized the love of God²⁷ and “denies that Christ’s death was a propitiation for God’s violated divine justice.”²⁸ The example view of atonement stressed that the life of Christ was enough to show the way to humanity in order they could escape from the penalty of sin, it means that the death of Jesus was not necessary to atone the sinners since Jesus has given an example how to be reconciled to God through His life.²⁹

Therefore, there were two main ideas about when atonement occurred among Christians in the nineteenth century in America. First was a concept that sees the death of Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, it means that the death of Christ was the beginning and the end of atonement. The second idea was that the death of Christ was an important event in human salvation, but it was not necessary as part of atonement, indeed, the

¹⁹ M. J. Erickson, “Theories of Atonement,” *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 91-92.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Remwil R. Tornalejo, “The Doctrine of Atonement as it Relates to the Humanity of Christ: A Comparative Study and Analysis of the Views of Irving, Barth and Sequeira,” (PhD diss, AIIAS, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2013), 57-58.

²⁶ Ibid., 48.

²⁷ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed for the Use of Theological Students*, vol. 2 (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), 2: 733.

²⁸ Tornalejo, “The Doctrine of Atonement,” 38.

²⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 429; see also Tornalejo, “The Doctrine of Atonement,” 43.

atonement is not needed at all. These understandings had a connection to the Millerites because the first concept was still held by some key Millerites leaders while the second idea was accepted partially by other influential leaders of this movement since they believed that the atonement happened after the ascension of Jesus even though his death on the cross was an important event for human beings.

The Concept of Atonement among Millerites

The Millerites were divided into two main ideas about when the atonement should be begun. The first was those who believed that the atonement happened on the cross and the ones who assumed that the atonement began as Jesus ascended to heaven where the cross was still an important event for salvation, but it was not part of atonement.

Atonement happened on the cross. Josiah Litch, a former Methodist before joining the Millerites,³⁰ believed that the atonement “had finished . . . on the cross” where the condition of blameless “can only be by obtaining pardon of God through the atonement.”³¹ It means he believed that atonement was a sacrifice of Jesus on the cross in which human beings could be forgiven and attained a state of innocence. He linked the atonement with the fulfillment of seventy weeks in Daniel chapter 9 where the cross was part of that prophecy. According to Litch, the atonement of Jesus on the cross made ‘reconciliation for iniquity’ where the sinners were reconciled to God.³² He also said that atonement could release a sinner from death and it was made by Christ when ‘he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and taste death for every man.’³³

The other prominent leader of Millerites who assumed this understanding was George Storrs. George Storrs linked the atonement of Jesus Christ to the state of the dead when he said that it is impossible to connect the immortality of the soul with the atonement that Jesus made on the cross. He argued that the death of Jesus was only a few days, but the death of the sinners would be for eternity. They could not be compared. This understanding would lead people to refuse the atonement of Jesus because Jesus did not taste what the sinners had. However, if death is an unconscious state, Jesus could experience what the sinners would experience in death. Thus, according to him the state of the dead that the dead know nothing is compatible with the idea of atonement that had been made by Jesus on the cross.³⁴

Charles Fitch, who was a minister of the Presbyterian Church before joining Millerites, received the general understanding of atonement that it happened on the cross. He said, “I had also seen in Christ a Saviour, who, after atoning for all mankind on the cross, was able, on the merits of that atonement, to save to the uttermost all that come to

³⁰ Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of Seventh-day Adventists* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005), 170.

³¹ Josiah Litch, *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ About A.D. 1843* (Boston, MA: David H. Ela, 1838), 190, 36.

³² Josiah Litch, *An address to the Public and Especially the Clergy* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1841), 84.

³³ Josiah Litch, *Prophetic Expositions; or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Time of Its Establishment* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 17.

³⁴ George Storrs, *Six Sermons on the Inquiry Is There Immortality in Sin and Suffering? Also, A Sermon on Christ the Life Giver: or, the Faith of the Gospel* (New York, NY: Bible Examiner Office, 1856), 137-138.

God by Him; and on that Saviour I had cast myself as my only hope, and trusted in Him, and Him only, as my Deliverer from the wrath of God.”³⁵ These three leaders of Millerites accepted the atonement that happened on the cross differed with two other important leaders such as William Miller and Samuel S. Snow.

Atonement started as Jesus ascended to heaven. William Miller understood that atonement happened as Jesus ascended to heaven. He stated that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as “the propitiatory sacrifice to God”³⁶ but the atonement was “made by his life and intercession in heaven”³⁷ thus, “through his intercession we can be saved by his life.”³⁸ Miller also distinguished the idea of atonement and the cleansing of the sanctuary. While he believed “the atonement to be made by the intercession of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of his blood in the Holy of Holies, and upon the mercy-seat and people; by which means the offender is reconcile to the will of God; and the effect is, forgiveness of sin,”³⁹ he also said that the cleansing is on the earth and upon his church. He suggested that there are seven ideas of sanctuary in the Bible, those are Jesus Christ, Heaven, Judah, the temple of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holiest, the church, and the saints. However, the cleansing would be done on this church and earth not in heaven.⁴⁰

The other leader among Millerites who agreed with Miller was Samuel S. Snow. He was the one who connected the Day of Atonement to the cleansing of the sanctuary and connected it to the second coming to Jesus. This was a developing understanding of what Miller said in 1843 to explain that the end of 2300 evening and mornings would happen on October 22 instead of Spring 1844. This concept was well-known as Seventh-Month Movement.⁴¹ About the atonement, he wrote that it was started when “the high priest went into the most holy place of the tabernacle, presenting the blood of the victim before the mercy seat, after which on the same day he came out and blessed the waiting congregation of Israel.” Then he understood the completion of the Day of Atonement was when he would be coming out of the sanctuary.⁴² Like Miller, Snow assumed that the atonement began at his ascension to heaven.

The understanding of atonement among Christianity in America in the nineteenth century was divided into two main divisions. The first was those who believed that the atonement happened on the Cross and the second was that the death of Christ is an important event, but it was not necessarily seen as atonement. These two concepts existed among Millerites in the writings of Josiah Litch, Fitch, and George Storrs who believed that the atonement happened on the cross, and the other group such as William Miller and Samuel S. Snow who assumed that it happened since Jesus ascended to heaven and saw the death of Christ not as a part of atonement even though it was as an important event.

³⁵ Charles Fitch, “Letter to the Presbytery of Newark,” in *Guide to Christian Perfection*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April, 1840, 217-218.

³⁶ William Miller, “Letter from Bro. Miller,” *Western Midnight Cry*, December 21, 1844, 26.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ That is Miller's ninth article of faith in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 78, 79

⁴⁰ William Miller, *Letter to Joshua V. Himes, on the Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 4-8.

⁴¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, rev. ed., (1996), s.v. “Seventh-Month Movement.”

⁴² Samuel S. Snow, “Behold, the Bridgroom Cometh; Go Ye Out to Meet Him,” *The True Midnight Cry*, 22 August 1844, 4.

Crosier's View on the Atonement

The idea of William Miller and Samuel S. Snow on the starting event of atonement in one way or another seems still to be retained by Crosier. He believed that the atonement started after the ascension of Jesus to heaven. This view could be seen through his writings about the sanctuary.

The Writings of Crosier about Sanctuary

When the Adventists waited for the coming of Jesus on October 22, 1844, they were waiting until midnight. The day after the Great Disappointment Hiram Edson asked a brother to join with him to strengthen the faith of their brothers and sisters. While they were in the cornfield Edson wrote "I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our high priest coming out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary He, for the first time, entered on that day into the second apartment of that sanctuary."⁴³ A brother who joined with him, according to J. N. Loughborough, was O. R. L. Crosier.⁴⁴

After this experience, the three persons Hiram Edson, O. R. L. Crosier, and F. B. Hahn discussed this issue and published it in March 1845. In this publication, Crosier was the editor and Hahn was the publisher. They named this publication as *Day-Dawn*. Nevertheless, the circulation of this issue was limited and did not attract much attention from the Adventists. Crosier elaborated his view in 1845 in the *Hope of Israel*, the *Day-Star*, and the *Voice of Truth*. His most mature understanding of the sanctuary was in the *Day-Star* "Extra" on February 7, 1846. In this publication, Joseph Bates, James White, Ellen G. White, and some other Adventists received the two phases of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. This view started playing a significant role in Seventh-day Adventist theology.⁴⁵

Ellen G. White, a year after the publication of *Day-Star* "Extra" suggested that "The Lord shew me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary, &c; and that it was his will, that Brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the *Day-Star*, Extra, February 7, 1846. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that Extra, to every saint."⁴⁶ This confirmation made this writing crucial to the Sabbatarian Adventists.

View on the Atonement

Crosier's two main writings on sanctuary and atonement were in *Day-Dawn* and *Day-Star* "Extra" published in 1845 and 1846. It can be seen from the re-printed of these

⁴³ The writings of Hiram Edson, later on, was found and cited in H. M. Kelley, "The Spirit of 1844," *RH*, June 23, 1921, 5; see also Paul A. Gordon, *The Sanctuary, 1844, and the Pioneers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983), 24-25.

⁴⁴ J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1905), 193.

⁴⁵ Timm, *Ellen White Encyclopedia*, 355.

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, "To Bro. Eli Curtis, New York City," in *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* ed. by James White (Gorham, ME: n.p., 1847), 12.

articles in *The Advent Review*⁴⁷ and *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*⁴⁸ several times. However, the most prominent writing of Crosier on this subject was *Day-Star* "Extra" under the title "Law of Moses."⁴⁹

His understanding of atonement on the cross was expanded through his writing in *Day-Star* "Extra" in 1846. In the publication, he said that the daily atonement is different from the yearly atonement. The first is described with the ministry of Jesus in the first apartment, which is only for forgiveness; then the later, Jesus' ministry in the most holy place, is for the blotting out of the righteous sins. However, they are consecutive events where the starting point is when the priest entered the sanctuary and worked for the salvation of God's people. He added, "It should be distinctly remembered that the priest did not begin his duties till he obtained the blood of the victim, and that they were all performed in the court (the enclosure of the Sanctuary), and that *the atonement thus made was only for the forgiveness of sins.*"⁵⁰ It means, according to him, that no record in the Bible of the atonement was begun with the sacrificial victim on the altar but it always be with the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary.

Regarding the death of Christ on the cross, he believed that it was a "victim slain." Even though he affirmed that atonement is made in the heavenly sanctuary, however, the sacrifice of Jesus in Calvary was only 'once for all' and the sinners could receive it by faith.⁵¹ Crosier thought that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient for all human beings, but it could not be counted as part of atonement.

Since his first appearance on the idea of atonement in 1845, Crosier assumed that the atonement finished on the cross was unreasonable. He wrote that "the atonement cannot be made until the last sin is pardoned."⁵² Thus, for him, the understanding of atonement on the cross as full and complete was unacceptable; when there were still many righteous persons born who would not be atoned yet. That is why, according to Crosier, the atonement should be finished in the final stage of the high priest ministry when he served in the most holy place and not on the cross.

In his article in 1846, Crosier explained further his reasons why he rejected the atonement on the cross and believed that the atonement was started after Jesus ascended to heaven. He thought if the atonement was complete on the cross, it means the yearly atonement (Day of Atonement) happened on that event. As the consequence is that the ministry of the priest in the holy place was done before the moment of Calvary. It means that forgiveness, the result of the daily ministry, would take place before Jesus was crucified. Then he argued there was no such event that happened before the episode of the death of Christ. Before the crucifixion, there was no record in the Scriptures about the ministry of Jesus in the holy place. Based on this understanding, Crosier believed that forgiveness is given through the ministry of the high priest in the holy place on the Day

⁴⁷ The editor republished the *Day-Star* "Extra" (1846) in August and September 1850 in *The Advent Review*. P. A. Gordon, *Pioneer Articles on the Sanctuary, the Judgment, 2300 Days Year-Day Principle, Atonement* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1983), 1-2.

⁴⁸ The editor reprinted *Day-Dawn* on May 5, 1851 under the title "The Sanctuary" and the *Day-Star* "Extra" was republished on September 2, 1852, also entitled "The Sanctuary." Ibid.

⁴⁹ Timm, *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 355.

⁵⁰ Crosier, *Day-Star* "Extra", 40. Italics are mine.

⁵¹ Ibid., 41.

⁵² Merlin D. Burt, "The *Day-Dawn* of Canandaigua, New York: Reprint of a Significant Millerite Adventist Journal," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44, no. 2(Autumn 2006): 321.

of Atonement When he serves in the sanctuary. These statements were general objections of Crosier that atonement happened on the cross.

To strengthen his argument, Crosier listed six reasons of his specific objections on why he disagreed with many Christians about the complete atonement of Jesus on the cross and believed that the atonement was started after his ascension to heaven. First, if the atonement happened on the cross, it means the one who officiated the sacrifice was the “Roman soldiers and wicked Jews” and not the priest, that is why he said that “The making of the atonement is the work of a Priest” and it should be made in the heavenly sanctuary. Second, Crosier suggested that the action to kill the victim is not an atonement act but “after that the Priest took the blood and made the atonement.” It means that the atonement should be made when the priest entered the sanctuary. The third reason for him is that the work of atonement only be done by Jesus Christ, the High Priest. He argued that the atonement might be possibly made after the resurrection. Nevertheless, there was no account in the Bible that Jesus performed atonement where he was on earth. That is why the atonement should be done when Jesus ascended to heaven and was starting his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Fourth, the atonement should be presented in the sanctuary. The Calvary was not such a proper place. He assumed that the heavenly sanctuary is a place to atone for the people of God. The fifth reason is that Jesus could not make atonement on earth based on Hebrew 8:4 that it should be executed in heaven where he started his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The sixth reason is his conclusion that the work of atonement could not be begun until the ascending of Jesus to heaven bringing his own blood into heavenly sanctuary for the benefit of the believers.⁵³ These are the reasons why Crosier rejected the cross as the full and complete atonement and proposed the idea that the atonement should be started when Jesus ascended to heaven and served in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

A moment in the cornfield where Hiram Edson got an impression of the heavenly sanctuary made him to study further about the sanctuary and came up with his writing in *Day-Dawn* in 1845. Later on, he developed his view on the subject in *Day-Star* “extra” in 1846. These two articles were his two major publications on the heavenly sanctuary and atonement. Subsequently, his idea became an important issue in Adventist theology.

Since his first writing on *Day-Dawn*, Crosier has explained his position that he refuted the idea of many Christians that the atonement was complete on the cross and defended the concept that the atonement was started when Jesus ascended to heaven and served in the heavenly sanctuary. He argued that atonement could only happen in the sanctuary and if the atonement was complete on the cross how about the righteous who lived after the cross’ event? Besides these general issues, he also gave six specific reasons why he rejected the view that the atonement cannot be accomplished fully on the cross and strongly argued for the starting point of atonement when Jesus served in the heavenly sanctuary. The subsequent section is a biblical-theological evaluation of his atonement idea.

⁵³ Crosier, *Day-Star* “Extra”, 41.

Evaluation of Crosier's Idea of Atonement

The idea of Crosier that the atonement did not happen on the cross but occurred in the heavenly sanctuary was followed by some Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers⁵⁴ and this approach prevailed until the twentieth century when some Evangelical Christians asked the position of the Adventist about the atonement on the cross.⁵⁵ That is why it is important to evaluate the objections of Crosier toward the atonement on the cross and his idea that it happened in the heavenly sanctuary based on the light of the Scriptures. Since Crosier has several objections, in this section, the evaluation will be divided into two main parts. The first will deal with the general objections and later will solve the specific ones.

Evaluation of Crosier's General Objections of Atonement

There are two general objections of Crosier regarding the atonement of the cross. First is that atonement could not be completed until all the repentant sins are forgiven. Then his second objection is that the atonement is related to the work of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and not on the cross. In his understanding, the complete atonement happened only when Jesus finishes his ministry in the Most Holy Place and blots out the believers' sins. Thus, his position disagreed with those who believed that atonement is complete on the cross. He thought that the concept of atonement started when the high priest entered the holy place on the Day of Atonement.⁵⁶ To evaluate his position, the information in the Scriptures about when the atonement should be started is very important to be understood.

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 is not just a central theme in this particular book but also the center of the Pentateuch.⁵⁷ In this chapter, God asked Aaron and his descendants that the one who would become a high priest should perform a ritual in offering sacrifice atonement such as bull and goat then using the blood to atone for the sins of the high priest, his family, and the people of Israel as well as to cleanse the sanctuary.

Atonement in Leviticus 16. Initially, the word "to make atonement" appears only referring to the work when the high priest applies the blood to the holy place (v. 17) and the altar (v. 18). However, at the end of this passage, God gave instruction to Israel "to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year" (Lev 16:34 NASB). It means that the word "to make atonement" or in Hebrew כפר involves the slaying of the victim. When God commanded the high priest "to make atonement" it is not just to apply or sprinkle the blood but before that, he should slay the animal.⁵⁸ Thus atonement encompasses the shedding and applying the blood for

⁵⁴ C. Mervyn Maxwell, "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, eds. Arnold W. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Lesser (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 523-524.

⁵⁵ Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist, *Question on Doctrines*, 341.

⁵⁶ Crosier, *Day-Star "Extra"*, 39.

⁵⁷ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary 4 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1992), 217.

⁵⁸ Averbeck agrees with this idea that the phrase "to make atonement" is including obtaining blood. Richard E. Averbeck, "כפר," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*

atonement. This idea is confirmed by seeing verses 2 to 34 as an inseparable account where atonement includes the sacrifice and the work of the high priest in the sanctuary.⁵⁹ It means the implication of this concept about the atonement of Jesus Christ is the cross and the work of Jesus as a high priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Sin offering of atonement. The phrase of the sin offering in the Lev 16: 6, 11 showed that the sacrifice of the animal is part of the rite. These expressions are אֲשֶׁר-וְנִקְרָא לָּהּ הַחֲטָאתָ לְךָ could be translated as “the sin offering which belonging to him, that he shall make atonement.” Since the sin offering has been part of him, the high priest could do the next part of the atonement which is applying the benefit of the atonement to the believers. Therefore, the sacrifice is a mandatory moment before the high priest ministers in the sanctuary. Without this, he cannot make atonement in the holy and most holy place. Furthermore, those Hebrew words could be translated as “sin offering of Atonement” which shows that atonement did not just about the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary but also include the slain victim.⁶⁰ In addition to the account of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, the book of Exodus (30:10) and Numbers (29:11) confirmed the idea that the sacrifice is part of the atonement through the expression of חֲטָאת הַכִּפּוּרִים (sin offering of atonement). It means in the Pentateuch; the term atonement encompasses the sacrifice of the atonement and the application of it in the sanctuary.

The word “atonement” in Greek words. Averbeck said that there are four Greek words related to “atonement” or “make atonement” and they occur 8 times in the New Testament. They are *hileos*, *hilaskomai*, *hilasterion*, and *hilasmos*. Among these four words, *hileos* is not related directly to the ritual of atonement, thus it will not be discussed in this study since it focuses on the “need of mercy of God.”⁶¹ The other word for atonement is *hilaskomai*. In the LXX the word *kofer*, which occurs 121 times in Hebrew, is constantly translated as *hilaskomai*.⁶² However, it seems in the Old Testament when LXX uses this word, it is a generic term of atonement and does not go to a specific meaning to the role of high priest in the sanctuary.⁶³

The third word is *hilasterion*. This word appears two times in the New Testament (NT) and in the Old Testament (OT) often times is translated as mercy seat, equivalent to

(*NIDOTTE*), ed. Willem. A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2: 693. Furthermore, Treyer suggested that the word “atonement” in the Old Testament ritual is “not simply restricted to rites of blood, but involved a whole series of acts and sacrifices” Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment from the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992), 209.

⁵⁹ Averbeck supports this idea. Averbeck, *NIDOTTE*, 700.

⁶⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel translated those Hebrew words as “sin offering of atonement.” He thought that the bull (v. 6) and the goat (v. 11) which are slain on the Day of Atonement are part of the atonement. Gerard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement II: The Day of Atonement,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, 116.

⁶¹ *Hileos* in New Testament could be found in Matthew 16:22 and Hebrews 8:12. Averbeck, *NIDOTTE*, 708.

⁶² Joel B. Green, “Atonement,” *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 1: 345.

⁶³ Exo 32:14, Deu 21:8, 2 King 5:18, 2 King 24:4, 2 Ch 6:30, Psa 24: 11, Psa 64:4, Psa 77: 38, psa 78:9 Lam 3:42, Dan 9:19. In the New Testament, this word occurs two times in Luk 18: 13 and Heb 2:17. In the Luke, it also appears as a common word for mercy and only in Hebrews that the term related to Jesus as high priest in doing propitiation for the sinners. However, it mostly refers not to the specific role of the high priest in the sanctuary.

the Hebrew word *הַכִּפֹּרֶת* (*hakapporet*). On the first occurrence of NT in Rom 3:25, the word is translated in NIV as “a sacrifice of atonement.” It means that it relates to the death of Christ.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, in the second occurrence in Heb 9:5, *hilasterion* in this passage is mostly translated in the reliable English translation of Scriptures as “mercy seat” or referring to it (NASB, KJV, NIV, RSV). Hence, this word could be applied to Jesus as the sacrifice of atonement and to the mercy seat in which the final atonement happened.⁶⁵ The word encompasses the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the place where the blood is applied on the mercy seat. It means that the atonement involved two aspects, the death of Jesus and his work in the sanctuary.

The fourth word is *hilasmos*. In the Pentateuch, it refers to the Day of Atonement or act of atonement. This Greek word is equivalent to the Hebrew word *hakkippurim*. Yet, this term is also used to signify the sacrifice of atonement in the phrase *אֵיל הַכִּפּוּרִים* (goat of atonement) in Numbers 5:8. Moreover, in the New Testament (1 John 2:2 and 4:10), it refers to Jesus Christ as the sacrifice of atonement (NIV) and propitiation of sins, the acts of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary (NASB, RSV, KJV). Thus, the atonement covers the sacrifice and the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary. Among these four words about atonement, *hilasterion* and *hilasmos* conceive the ritual meaning of atonement that encompass the phase of sacrifice and the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary, and as the implication, it includes the death of Jesus on the cross and his work in the heavenly sanctuary.

Atonement in Hebrews and Revelation. In the book of Hebrews, one of the indications of the Day of Atonement is in Heb 9:28,⁶⁶ “so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (NASB). In this passage, initially, Jesus was offered as the victim, and then as he will finish his work in the most holy place. Therefore, the idea of atonement begins with the sacrifice of atonement and the ministry of Jesus in the sanctuary. In the book of Revelation, Rev 5:9-10 and 14:1-3 describes the work of Jesus as the slain lamb and his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. In Rev. 5:9 Jesus was slain, and it portrays him as he died on the cross. In verse 10, the righteous enjoy their position as kings and priests as the result of his atonement in the sanctuary. The atonement in 14:1-3 starts with the lamb and then followed with the song of the 144,000 as the result of his atonement in the most holy place.⁶⁷ Therefore, in the book of Hebrews and Revelation, they describe the atonement as a process from the cross until the application of the benefit of atonement in the sanctuary.

As the concept of the atonement in the Bible has been understood, then to evaluate the objection of Crosier can be made. The first objection of Crosier and his defense for

⁶⁴ Brandenburger agrees that *hilasterion* in Rom 3:25 relates to Jesus' death on the cross. E. Branderburger, “σταυρός,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 398.

⁶⁵ Louw-Nida assumed that the mercy seat was “the location or place where sins are forgiven.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Rondal B. Smith (1989), s.v. “ἵλαστήριον.”

⁶⁶ William G. Johnsson, “The Significance of the Day of Atonement Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, 387.

⁶⁷ Mario Veloso, “The Doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Atonement as Reflected in the Book of Revelation,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, 407-408.

the atonement in the sanctuary is that the atonement could not be done completely on the cross since there are many righteous still alive in a sense that the application of the benefit of atonement to the believers is not yet done. The Bible applies the word of atonement including the sacrifice of the atonement on the cross and its application in the heavenly sanctuary. In Crosier's objection that atonement happens to all believers, the biblical idea involves the cross to all the righteous in this concept. Christians generally believed that atonement was complete on the cross since they believed on predestination and the application of it would weaken the predestination concept. That is why Christians in general do not believe in the application of atonement as part of it.

However, the second general objection that the atonement was started as Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection is against biblical accounts. Scriptures state that the atonement happened on the cross and then continued to the application in the heavenly sanctuary. After comprehending the Bible's principle about atonement, the evaluation of the specific objections begins.

Evaluation of Crosier's Specific Objections of Atonement

The six specific objections are based on the general understanding of Crosier that the complete atonement will be done after the high priest finishes his final atonement in the most holy place and the starting point of the atonement is when Jesus ascended to heaven. Based on this idea he wrote his specific objections.

The first specific objection of Crosier is that he assumed that Christians generally believed that the final atonement happened on the cross then the ones who officiate it were Roman soldiers and the wicked Jews thus it is not the high priest. Crosier thought that the atonement must be in the sanctuary. Yet, the Bible's view of point about the cross is, it is the sacrifice of atonement, the basis of application of it in the heavenly sanctuary. Crosier's idea about atonement only happening in the holy place is rejected.

The second and third specific objections of Crosier have based on the Day of Atonement that the atonement started when the priest entered the sanctuary and consequently is the atonement only done by the high priest. However, the Scriptures' understanding of the atonement is it should cover the sacrifice of atonement and the ministry of the high priest in the holy and most holy place. Therefore, his limited idea that atonement is only related to the application of atonement is refuted.

As the result of the previous concept of atonement, Crosier assumed the fourth specific objection that atonement should be made in the sanctuary. In his thinking, the ministry of the high priest in the holy and most holy place cannot be equated to the Calvary. His opinion agrees with the Bible that the ministry of the high priest in the earthly sanctuary is associated with the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. The problem is he could not see that the sacrifice of the victim is associated with the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ and not with His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. And the sacrificial ceremony was done in front of the holy place.

The fifth specific objection of Crosier is based on Heb 8:4 that the atonement could not be done on earth but should be in heaven. He is right as far as the application work of the high priest is concerned. Yet, once again the Bible mentions that the atonement includes the sacrifice of the atonement, and it happened in the outside part of the holy and most holy place.

Based on the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary, he concluded his opinion by suggesting his sixth specific objection that the atonement could not be done when Jesus was on earth, but it was started when he ascended to heaven. On this concept, Crosier did not study the word atonement throughout the Bible, he just focused on the work of the high priest in the sanctuary and included the idea of Jesus' sacrifice as part of the atonement.

Crosier's basic understanding of the atonement is on the working of the high priest in the sanctuary where he applies the benefit of the atonement to the believers. He rejects the concept of Christians in general that the cross is final and complete atonement.

Through the examination of the Bible regarding the word "atonement," it is found that the concept of atonement on the Day of Atonement was not just restricted to the ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary, but it involves the atonement's sacrifice. The term "sin offering of atonement" in the Pentateuch also reflects the meaning of atonement covers the slaying of the victim and the application of the blood in the sanctuary.

There are two words in the New Testament that reflect atonement in the New Testament. They are *hilasterion* and *hilasmos*. These two terms indicate that the atonement includes the sacrifice of the atonement and the work of the high priest in the sanctuary. This description also appears in the book of Hebrews and Revelation where the idea of atonement covers both phases of atonement.

Through the understanding of the Bible that the atonement does not exclude the sacrifice of atonement, the general and specific objections of Crosier that the atonement occurred on the Cross and his argument that the atonement only happens in the heavenly sanctuary could be answered since he just thought that the atonement was started in heaven after the ascended of Jesus while Scriptures include the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and its application in the heavenly sanctuary. Crosier's objections to the understanding of Christians that atonement completes on the cross are based on the work of the high priest in the sanctuary and not on a thorough study of the word of atonement.

Summary and Conclusion

Many Christians thought that the Seventh-day Adventists believe that atonement does not happen on the cross but it only happens in the heavenly sanctuary since the pioneers of the Adventists assumed that this ministry started when Jesus ascended to heaven and began his mediation for the sake of His people.

Summary

In the nineteenth century, Christians were generally divided into two groups those who believed that atonement happened on the cross and those who assumed that the death of Christ is an important event, but it was not necessarily seen as atonement. This situation existed in the Millerites movement when Josiah Litch, Charles Fitch, and George Storrs suggested this first concept, but William Miller and Samuel S. Snow believed the latter idea but added that the atonement happened since his ascension to heaven. When the Great Disappointment happened in 1844 it was the starting point for Crosier to study this topic further.

In Crosier's writings in 1845 and 1846 was found that he retained an aspect of Miller and Snow's understanding that the atonement happened as Jesus ascended to heaven. It seems that Crosier focused on the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. He ignored the cross as part of atonement but defended that the ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary after his ascension was the starting point of atonement.

A study on the biblical atonement proves that the atonement does not exclude the sacrifice of the atonement of Jesus on the cross, indeed, it includes it. Atonement encompasses two aspects of rituals: the sacrifice, and the application of atonement. The understanding of the atonement in Lev. 16 and the sacrifice of atonement in Pentateuch refer to the victim slain as a part of the atonement. The Greek words of atonement such as *hilasterion* and *hilasmos* confirmed the idea that the atonement is not just about the ministry of the high priest or priest in the sanctuary but includes the sacrifice of the victim. The book of Hebrews and Revelation expounds this idea as well.

Conclusion

After studying the heavenly sanctuary, Crosier came up with a conclusion that the atonement started in heaven based on the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. According to Crosier, the atonement happened when the high priest did his ministry in the holy and most holy place. It means that the ascension of Jesus and his ministry in the holy place of heavenly sanctuary was the beginning of atonement. Furthermore, the reason why he believed the atonement happened after Jesus' ascension was that he focused on the work of the high priest in the sanctuary and did not examine the meaning of atonement in a broader sense.

Nevertheless, a study on the atonement in the Day of Atonement in Lev. 16 and the meaning of the "sacrifice of atonement" in the Pentateuch shows that the atonement was started since the sacrifice of atonement and followed by its application in the sanctuary. This understanding is confirmed by the Greek words *hilasterion* and *hilasmos* and also appears in the book of Hebrews and Revelation where the death of Jesus on Calvary is followed by the application of the benefit of atonement for believers in the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore, the death of Christ and his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary are a package in the atonement; this was the thing that Crosier could not see.

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