



WHAT DID
the
CROSS ACCOMPLISH?

A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

N. T. WRIGHT
SIMON GATHERCOLE
ROBERT B. STEWART

“The cross of Jesus Christ is central to the New Testament, and many views of what the cross accomplished have been debated. Here is a fascinating dialogue between two New Testament scholars who range throughout the Scriptures, presenting their views of the significance of the atonement—the death of Jesus Christ. Wright and Gathercole question each other, and they respond to questions from their audience. Their stimulating discussion opens wide areas to contemplate as we see their paths converge and diverge from each other. Important insights emerge here. So do deeper perceptions of what the cross can mean, theologically and personally.”

—Donald K. McKim, former Academic Dean
and Professor of Theology,
Memphis Theological Seminary

“Reading this enthralling book deepens and remolds our understanding of the cross of Jesus. Wright’s holistic atonement is truly enlightening, Gathercole’s substitutionary atonement is thought provoking, and Stewart’s view of the Lord’s Supper is enriching. This book must be read by all Christians who tussle with different atonement theories.”

—Andrew S. Park, author of *Triune Atonement*
and Professor of Theology and Ethics,
United Theological Seminary

“Jesus’ death bears many meanings in Scripture and Christian interpretation, including the defeat of Satan, forgiveness of sins, demonstration of love, creation of community, sign of solidarity, and start of the eschaton. In this book, eminent scholars N. T. Wright and Simon Gathercole—having already written books on Christ’s cross—speak, spout, split, and specify these many meanings in amazing ways. Enlivened by queries from the floor, their conversation concludes without closure, and

yet this slender volume offers entrée into today's atonement debates. Stewart's introduction and concluding bibliography further enhance its value as a starting point for those just dipping their toes into the ocean of literature on Jesus' death."

—Michael McClymond,
Professor of Modern Christianity,
Saint Louis University

"This heady conversation among serious theologians who are good humored, agile, and erudite is a model for how the church thinks. The topic of atonement remains a mystery beyond formulation, which, of course, is why the church has never pronounced definitively on the theme. In the meantime, the pondering of these theologians lets us see (1) how faithful thinking is done, (2) how thick the claim of Christ is, and (3) how serious, generous interpretation is generative of new possibility. This is a welcome conversation that sketches out imaginative scenarios for future work. The practice of this book is one of deep faith and bold thinking, just what the church must now undertake in fresh ways."

—Walter Brueggemann, William Marcellus McPheeters
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament,
Columbia Theological Seminary

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Jesus' death launches, as a great act of cosmic and global revolution, the new world in which—with the grip of the powers broken—freedom, forgiveness, and new creation can flourish and abound, confronting all the power systems that still depend on idolatry and assuring the world of God's ultimate victory over death itself.

—N. T. Wright

What does it mean for the cross, meaning the death of Jesus for our sins, to take place “according to the Scriptures”? To touch on one part of the Old Testament framework, we see throughout the Old Testament that disobedience—whether that of Adam and Eve in the garden, or of Israel, or of the Gentiles—leads to death. The miracle of the gospel is that this link between our sin and our death has been broken. *Christ* died for *our* sins. Substitution is there at the heart of the gospel. Christ died so that we don't need to die. Christ bore our sins so that we don't need to bear them.

—Simon Gathercole

The earliest apostolic teaching on the atonement was performative rather than propositional. Simply put, Jesus' earliest disciples were engaging in atonement theology every time they took part in the Lord's Supper. Before any of the Gospels were begun, before any book of the New Testament was penned, even before Paul's Damascus-road experience, Christians regularly met and engaged in a ritual meal filled with atonement metaphors.

—Robert B. Stewart

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