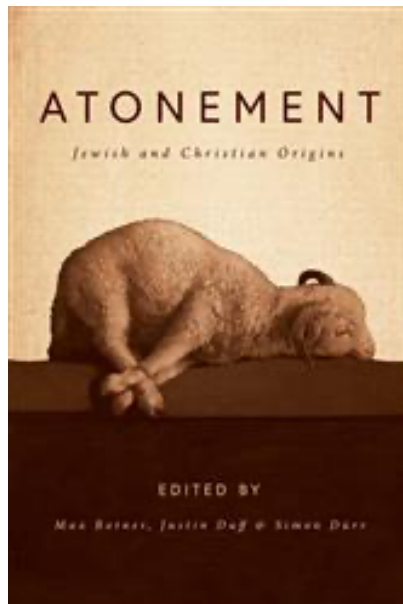


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Max Botner, Justin Harrison Duff, and Simon Dürr, eds.

Atonement: Jewish and Christian Origins

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The nine essays in this fine collection originated as presentations at a June 2018 symposium on the subject of atonement held at the University of Saint Andrews in Scotland. The essays offer examinations by seasoned experts in their fields of some of the most significant aspects of the history of the concept of atonement—“points of entry,” as the book’s editors characterize them, into a “vast marketplace of atonement theologies” (xvi). Accordingly, the editors’ introduction takes note of the “highly flexible” logic that characterizes two millennia of Jewish and Christian theorizing of “atonement,” the developments in sacrificial rituals across different strata of the Hebrew Bible, and the diversity of interpretations of atonement traditions in Second Temple Judaism. The book’s emphasis on understanding the distinct configurations of sin, sacrifice, and salvation in the atonement theologies of key early Jewish and Christian texts represents a very welcome approach to a field of study that is frequently examined from the perspective of later doctrinal formulations of atonement (and often, really, abstract models of those formulations).

On the one hand, the contributors continue, some more than others, to use the umbrella term “atonement,” which tends to be more useful in discussions of later Christian doctrine than in detailed historical analysis of the various ancient concepts, texts, and practices that fall under that term. On the other hand, they all clearly evince a critical awareness of the complexity of the historian’s task of relating the various ancient components encompassed by the category “atonement” and ably guide readers through their development of fresh scholarly insights into the

ancient evidence. The result is a rich smorgasbord of scholarship on the relationship between sin, sacrifice, and salvation in Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and early Christianity that I can recommend to readers of all levels, but particularly graduate students.

Some of the essays are more lexically oriented (Deborah Rooke) and/or focused on specific sources or texts (Deborah Rooke on the *karet* penalty in P; David Wright on the H amendment to P on the subject of the sacrificial requirements of the immigrant/*gēr*; Crispin Fletcher-Louis on how to read the description of the high priest in Sir 49:16–50:21; Catrin H. Williams on the analysis of composite allusions related to the salvific significance of Jesus’s death in John; T. J. Lang on the commercial metaphors used to describe the Holy Spirit in Eph 1:13); other essays are more thematic, covering larger but still carefully delimited ranges of texts and time periods (Christian A. Eberhart, Carol Newsom, N. T. Wright, and Martha Himmelfarb). The essays that might be said to cast the widest nets are those of Christian A. Eberhart and N. T. Wright, which explicitly broach questions central to New Testament and Biblical theology.

The book is divided into two parts: the first includes three chapters that cover critical issues and the development of cultic legislation in the Hebrew Bible; the second is made up of six chapters that examine the anthropology, cosmology, and role of mediators in early Jewish and Christian atonement theologies.

Christian A. Eberhart’s “Atonement: Amid Alexandria, Alamo, and Avatar” opens the book with a survey of key developments in the study of atonement in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that underlines the significant implications that technical discussions of, for example, sacrificial ritual can carry for our interpretation of the meaning of biblical sacrifice and atonement generally. Whereas sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible was once strongly associated with ritual slaughter in particular, this has given way to a “polythetic” approach to sacrifice, in which each of the ritual elements of sacrifice is given due place in interpretation, and greater roles are accorded to purification/consecration through blood application (following Jacob Milgrom), and the burning rite by which each of the five types of sacrificial offering delineated in Lev 1–7 ascend to God. Turning to the New Testament, he notes that early Christian authors used atonement concepts to conceptualize the significance of Jesus’s death but—pointing to several critical issues that mitigate against common assertions of the influence of Isaiah’s fourth Servant Song on Rom 4:25—ultimately argues that their creative development of atonement concepts should be considered a secondary, rather than primary, way of understanding the significance of Jesus’s death: “Without the [resurrection], it is unlikely that early Christians would have described Jesus’s death on the cross as a salvific event—nor would they have formulated atonement theologies around it” (18).

Deborah Rooke, in “Sin, Sacrifice, but No Salvation: When the Circle Cannot Be Completed,” examines the penalty of *karet*, or “cutting off,” in P, typically understood by exegetes as entailing premature death and/or lack of descendants inflicted by God upon arrogant commission of

heinous sins. Rooke identifies various ways in which the penalty is worded in P texts and argues that each reflects a different level of the seriousness of the offense as well as a prescriptive attempt to inculcate the values of the Priestly legislators (i.e., the community should respond to the various classes of sin/sinner according to the Priestly hierarchy of offenses). From most to least severe: Yahweh says “I will cut off [*hiphil*] from the midst of their people”; “X will be cut off [*niphal*] from the midst of the people”; “X will be cut off [*niphal*] from Israel, the congregation of Israel, or the assembly”; and “The offender is cut off [*niphal*] from their peoples (pl.).”

David Wright, in “Atonement beyond Israel: The Holiness School’s Amendment to Priestly Legislation on the Sin Sacrifice (ḥaṭṭā’t),” argues that in Num 15:22–31 H amends P regulations on the ḥaṭṭā’t to include the immigrant (*gēr*) because H maintains that the sins of the *gēr* can pollute the land.

Carol Newsom’s “When the Problem Is Not What You Have Done but Who You Are: The Changing Focus of Atonement in Second Temple Prayer and Poetry” focuses on a Second Temple discourse of moral agency, sin, and atonement that shifts concern away from the commission of specific sins to the problem of an innate sinful condition. Included in this category of texts are, for example, certain passages from the Qumran Hodayot, certain passages in Job, Ps 51, and 11QPs^a 24. Newsom points to exilic and postexilic prophecies that highlight a coming divine transformation of the hearts of Israelites enabling their obedience to God’s laws (e.g., Deut 30:1–10; Jer 31:33–34; Ezek 36:26b–27a) at the origins of this alternative discourse. While this discourse exhibits a kind of anthropological pessimism, it does so in order to highlight the transforming power of God’s spirit and “construct new forms of religious experience that promised a sense of moral transformation, intimacy with God, and even mystical acts of liturgical communion with the angels themselves” (88).

“The High Priest in Ben Sira 50: The High Priest Is an Incorporative Divine Messiah and At-One-Ment Takes Place through Worship in the Microcosm,” by Crispin Fletcher-Louis, argues that Sir 50 reflects a Second Temple belief that the high priest served as representative of humanity, Israel, heavenly bodies, vegetation, and even God, functioning to suggest that “everyone and everything are summed up and find their properly ordered place in God’s presence, in and through [the office of the high priest] and this people-at-worship” (111).

N. T. Wright, in “Get the Story Right and the Models Will Fit: Victory through Substitution in ‘Atonement Theology,’” argues that if we read Jesus’s saving death through the lens of the Passover narrative, as God’s victory over sin and death through the Messiah’s substitutionary death for human sins, we will recognize in it the synthesis and fulfillment of central biblical themes: “creation and new creation, covenant and renewed covenant, the defeat and overthrow of evil, the rescue of idolaters from the grip and consequence of their sin, and the establishment of the new heaven and new earth in which ‘the dwelling of God is with humans’” (129–30).

Catrin Williams's "Seeing, Salvation, and the Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John: Intertextual Perspective on the Johannine Understanding of Jesus' Death" examines three groups of composite allusions in the Gospel of John used to suggest that seeing Jesus's death brings salvation: beholding the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36), which conflates the lamb of the Passover ritual with the Suffering Servant of Isa 53 and various Isaianic references to seeing God (Isa 40:9, 10 LXX); the "lifting up" sayings (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34) that merge such texts as Num 21:4-9 and Isa 52:13; and seeing "the pierced one" (John 19:36-37), which alludes to Zech 12:10 and Isa 52:10, 15.

In "Sealed for Redemption: The Economics of Atonement in Ephesians," T. J. Lang examines commercial "sealing" and "redemption" language used in Ephesians to describe God's Spirit as both seal, indicating God's possession of people ransomed by the currency of Jesus's death, and down payment toward the inheritance of those made heirs through Jesus's action.

Martha Himmelfarb's "What Goes On in the Heavenly Temple? Celestial Praise and Sacrifice in Ancient Judaism and Christianity" surveys apocalyptic descriptions of the heavenly temple and notes that, while various cultic gifts are offered in this celestial space, with a particular focus on the aroma of the gift, blood manipulation is generally absent with the exception of the one-time atonement offering of Christ in Hebrews.