



BOOK NOTE REVIEW

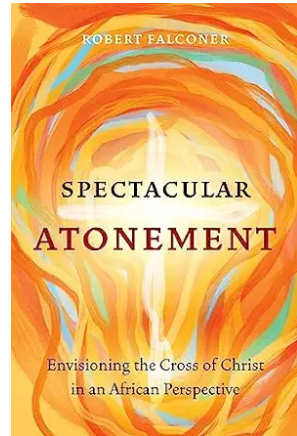
Falconer, Robert. *Spectacular Atonement: Envisioning the Cross of Christ in an African Perspective.* 2nd edition. Foreword by Samuel Waje Kunhiyop. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2023. Pp. 147. US \$22.99 (Paperback), US\$12.99 (Kindle)

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Spectacular Atonement: Envisioning the Cross of Christ in an African Perspective adds a valuable African voice to the growing body of World Christian contributions to contextualized theology. Drawing on biblical and historical theology, as well as African Christian theologians, it explores the penal substitution and Christus Victor theories of the atonement as complementary and then applies the finished work of Christ to specific realities within broader African cultural contexts. The book argues that the cross of Christ fulfills “the very yearnings of the African people as revealed in their myths and traditions” (xvi). This book speaks to the global Christian community while speaking with a voice that is uniquely African.



Recent literature treating atonement theory includes studies arguing for either penal substitution or Christus Victor. Rare contributions such as Hans Boersma’s *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Baker Academic, 2006) and Scot McKnight’s *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Abingdon Press, 2007) argue that the two theories are both equally biblical and valid. This book argues that penal substitution is the means of atonement and Christus Victor is its purpose. Aside from *Spectacular Atonement*, the reviewer is not familiar with any contributions outside Western Christianity that treat the two theories as complementary, which adds to the value of the work under review.

BOOK NOTE REVIEW: *Spectacular Atonement: Envisioning the Cross of Christ in an African Perspective*, by Robert Falconer

Utilizing qualitative methodology, the book was written in two parts. The first part examines atonement in Scripture, historical sources, and African Christianity. In the Post-Reformation section of the historical review, the author's sources focus heavily on Reformed-tradition authors. The work could have included a brief sampling of Wesleyan and Pentecostal views of the atonement to provide a broader theological spectrum. The second part applies atonement to specific aspects of a general African traditional worldview and African spirituality, including ancestors, evil spirits, sin, witchcraft, suffering, humanity, cosmic harmony, and an African hope. This section is well-informed and skillfully argued, providing readers with a comparison and contrast of African worldview topics from a variety of African authors. Falconer's unique contribution is his contextualization of Christ as the Supreme Ancestor, based largely on Christ's role as the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). Readers leery of contextualization may have concerns with this proposal; those supportive of the practice will understand Falconer's concern and the logic of his argument.

Spectacular Atonement is well researched and thoroughly documented. At the same time, the language is accessible to a wide range of readers. The theology is orthodox without diving too deeply for lay readers. Falconer clearly grasps the biblical languages yet rarely refers to them directly. This work is suitable for everyone interested in contextualization, the atonement, African Christianity, and African worldviews. The book would serve well as a supplementary textbook in Bible colleges and seminaries for missiology and theology students. Finally, anyone going to Africa for short- or long-term mission work would benefit from reading this book. *Spectacular Atonement* is an important contribution to the literature of World Christianity.