

HOW COULD PRAYER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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Abstract. I critically respond to Scott A. Davison, *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation*. I attack his Contrastive Reasons Account of what it takes for a request to be answered and provide an alternative account on which a request is answered as long as it has deliberative weight for the person asked. I also raise issues with Davison's dismissive treatment of direct divine communication. I then emphasize the importance of value theory for addressing the puzzles of petitionary prayer. Whether a defense of petitionary prayer is successful depends on whether it can support the sort of requests that are central to the theological practices of the religion in question, explaining how they could be known to be effective, and this depends on the value theory of the theology in question. As an example, I show the relevance the traditional distinction between temporal and spiritual goods could have for knowing whether one's prayers have been answered. How prayers could make a difference also depends on the theology in question, raising issues of ecclesiology and collective action that demand further attention.

Does God hear our prayers? Does God respond to them? In his "*Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation*"¹, Scott Davison explores the landscape of the contemporary debate on this question within analytic philosophy. He frames his question as a hypothetical, "assuming that the God of traditional theism exists, is it reasonable to think that God answers specific prayers?"² Does prayer influence God's action in the world?

To evaluate whether prayer makes a difference, we need to know what it takes for a request to count as influencing an action. After an introductory chapter, Davison presents and defends his response to this question, the Contrastive Reasons Account (CRA):

CRA: S's petitionary prayer (token) for an object E is answered by God if and only if God's desire to bring about E just because S requested it plays an essential role in a true contrastive explanation of God's bringing about E rather than not.³

This model has problems even in the case of human requests. Davison's emphasis on the request having an "essential role in a true contrastive explanation" is supposed to be motivated by cases where a request for an action provides a reason, but not the one that actually explains or motivates the action. In one of Davison's examples, I trim my tree after a neighbor asks me to trim it. However, "I am largely indifferent to my neighbour's preferences" and have other reasons for carrying out the tree trimming.⁴ I agree with Davison that in such a case we should not take my action to be a response to my neighbour's request.

I disagree with Davison's analysis of the case, however. Davison suggests this request is not answered because the relative weight of the neighbor's request isn't sufficient: other reasons for trimming or not trimming the tree are more important. He claims that whether a request counts as being fulfilled depends on the relative weight it has in one's actual reasons for acting. This suggests an additive and zero-sum model of reasons and action, where each reason for action adds a certain value (so on his model, perhaps my action would be a response to my neighbor's request if at least 20% of my motivation is provided by

1 Scott A. Davison, *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation* (OUP, 2017).

2 Ibid., 5.

3 Ibid., 38.

4 Ibid., 35.

that request). Whether reasons can be summed, however, is a disputed question requiring a defense as well as more explanation of why Davison takes the view he does.⁵

My indifference to my neighbour's preferences is what prevents my tree trimming from being a request fulfillment, not the presence of other stronger reasons. On Davison's scenario, my neighbour's opinion does not function as an action-generating practical reason for me. I don't care enough about his request to trim my tree and that would be true even if I have no reason not to trim my tree. This reason is not sufficient to generate an ought.⁶ In Joshua Gert's terminology, the neighbor's preference might, at best, provide *justifying weight* (it could help make my trimming rational), but it does not provide *requiring weight* (it would not make me subject to criticism for failing to trim the tree, assuming my indifference is permissible).⁷ This reason evidently lacks deliberative weight, as it seems I could ignore my neighbor's preference without affecting the quality of my practical reasoning.

Contrast that with a case where my wife asks me to give the kids a bath and I do so. Here my wife's request has requiring weight. I am subject to blame if I fail to fulfill it, even if my own preference for my children to be clean would have led me to give them a bath, absent her request. If I recognize the requiring weight of my wife's request, then I am acting to fulfill her request, whether or not there are additional reasons in play.⁸ Davison's account allows for prayer to be efficacious either when it provides the only reason for God to bring something about or when it adds significant weight to reasons that would not be conclusive on their own. He denies, however, that prayer can be effective in any case in which God already has conclusive reasons for bringing about the object of prayer. This is wrong. If a request I receive is sufficient to move me to some action, then my action is done in response to that action, regardless of how many or how weighty my other reasons for performing that action are.

Davison's account struggles when there are multiple reasons pulling in the same direction, each of which would be sufficient on its own to motivate action. Davison is aware of this difficulty and is tempted to avoid it by ruling out such a possibility. He suggests that even when there appear to be multiple conclusive reasons for doing something "there might be a fact of the matter with regard to which of the two conclusive reasons in question actually moved God to bring about E."⁹ What moves me to teach my students? On Davison's picture, my actions can express my care for my students or my love of wisdom (or maybe just my desire for continuing employment) but not both. More fundamentally, can we do something for the sake of our own happiness and also for the sake of love of God? If we accept Davison's suggestion, then it looks like our actions will turn out, in fact, to be done for only one of these reasons.

While some (especially those of a certain Kantian persuasion) may accept this view, it is the wrong path. I can give my children birthday presents both because I want to express my love for them and because my children asked for them. Both of these can be reasons that conclusively motivate me to act and my action can actually express both reasons. If we concede this, then the question is whether our prayers could give God a good reason to act, not whether they trump other reasons for or against some action.¹⁰ The defender of petitionary prayer should be loath to give up multiple operative reasons, otherwise God could act for the sake of God's overall providential plan for the cosmos or for the sake of an individual, but not for the sake of both at once.

The bulk of Davison's book is set up as a series of challenges and defenses to petitionary prayer. Davison helpfully lays out ways in which challenges can differ due to their scope (restricted to a particular kind of prayers vs. unrestricted) and their basis (e.g. metaphysical vs. epistemological). Chapter 3 pre-

5 For discussion see Errol Lord and Maguire, Barry, "An Opinionated Guide to the Weight of Reasons" In *Weighing Reasons*, ed. Errol Lord & Barry Maguire, (OUP, 2016), 3–26; Ralph Bader, "Conditions, Modifiers and Holism", in *ibid.*, 27–55; Joshua Gert, "The Distinction between Justifying and Requiring: Nothing to Fear," in *ibid.*, 157–172.

6 Cf. Jonathan Dancy, "Enticing Reasons." In *Reason and Value: Themes From the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace et al. (Clarendon 2004), 91–118.

7 Gert, "The Distinction between Justifying and Requiring".

8 Cf. Caleb M. Cohoe, "God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer", *Faith and Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (2014): 37–39.

9 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 42.

10 Cf. Caleb Cohoe, "God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer", 37–39, especially fn. 37.

sents metaphysical challenges to prayer based on divine freedom, where the worry is that responding to requests would be incompatible with God's metaphysical freedom. Suppose God did, in fact, act in response to someone's prayer. If, Davison says, God has freedom in the libertarian sense of being able to do otherwise, God could have failed to act in response to this request, casting doubt on whether the request is efficacious. I agree with Davison that this is a serious worry for libertarians about freedom, though it is worth noting that this worry is not particular to *divine* petition, just to how asking can serve as a cause at all, if the requester being asked has freedom in the libertarian sense.

Chapter 4 considers epistemological challenges about whether we could know, either generally or in specific cases, that God answers petitionary prayer. Here Davison sets aside direct revelation from God, asserting that it "is very unusual for people to claim that God has provided it, and the teachings of the central theistic religious traditions do not lead us to expect it today."¹¹ He does return in chapter 5 to the related idea of divine illumination, a view on which "God enlightens the mind of the petitioner ... to see the reasons for the provision or its failure," but he remains dubious.¹²

Davison there raises the question of whether one could distinguish the experience of God telling you that your prayer has been answered from other related experiences, such as experiencing one's own voice as God's or feeling the presence of God, but not because God is answering your prayer. These are real concerns, but of course similar issues occur with perception (e.g. can I reliably and safely distinguish an experience of a red apple from an experience of redness caused by lighting conditions?). Many perceptual or quasi-perceptual abilities are hard to develop, but are nonetheless possessed by at least some. Tanya Luhrmann, in *When God Talks Back*, an anthropological examination of American evangelical religious groups whose spiritual practices are designed to allow practitioners to hear God's voice, suggests that these practitioners think hearing God's voice is a developed capacity involving "repeated exposure and attention."¹³ It is similar to the sonogram technician's developed capacity to distinguish images of the baby from noise or the wine expert's ability to taste the variety of grape used.¹⁴ Scott Davison states that "the traditional theistic religious traditions do not promise knowledge concerning particular answered petitionary prayers."¹⁵ While this holds true of some religious traditions, I am not sure why Davison takes himself to be entitled to this broad generic statement, particularly since he mentions Luhrmann's book, a work which repeatedly notes the widespread role that purported experiences of divine revelation play in contemporary spirituality.¹⁶ Given the importance many religious traditions put on illumination or revelation from God, Davison should at least discuss what it would take to support such claims (e.g. how much of a track record is required? is being regarded as reliably discerning by one's community enough?). Luhrmann and others discuss some of the tests and techniques used by contemporary believers, while there are many rich discussions of how to discern God's voice in various theological traditions, including, for example, medieval Christian thought.¹⁷ Dismissing all of these views without engagement does the reader a disservice.

11 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 62.

12 Davison is quoting Michael Murray, "God Responds to Prayer", in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Michael Peterson and Raymond vanArrogen (Blackwell, 2004), 249.

13 Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (Knopf, 2012), 60.

14 *Ibid.*, 60–62.

15 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 90.

16 In a 2006 Pew survey of American religious life 26% of respondents claimed to have experienced a "direct revelation from God," (Luhrmann, 333, n. 14); discerning God's voice is also important in many contemporary religious movements in the Global South.

17 The notion of discerning the spirits as a capacity to discern true communications from God from false or demonic appearances shows up in Cassian and Augustine and then continues throughout the medieval tradition. For a history of the mystical tradition see Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (Crossroad, 1991); Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (Crossroad, 1994); Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)* (Crossroad, 1998); Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany: (1300–1500)* (Crossroad, 2005); for some key medieval discussions of discernment see Alfonso of Jaén, *Epistola solitarii* cap. vi–vii (in Arne Jönsson, *Alfonso of Jaén: His Life and Works with Critical Editions of the Epistola Solitarii, the Informaciones and the Epistola Serui Christi* (Lund Univ. Press, 1989)); John Gerson, *Oeuvres IX*, 180 (in Paschal Boland, *The Concepts of Discretio Spirituum in John Gerson's "De Probatione*

This leads into a larger issue with Davison's overall approach: his lack of detailed engagement with theological views on the objects and recipients of prayer. Petitionary prayer is a relational activity — it is directed at someone. What prayer is depends on who you are asking (i.e., on the nature and character of the divine) and what you are asking for, on the range of objects appropriate to prayer. But both the sort of being and the context in which you address this being (as a friend, as an authority, etc.) differ across religious traditions. On the question of who is being prayed to, Davison settles for a (supposedly generic) traditional theistic deity. In chapter 1, he lays out some of the options for views on the knowledge and power such a being would have (e.g. the relevance of different views on divine power and foreknowledge for what God could or could not do in response to prayer) and applies them in chapter 3's discussion of divine freedom. But Davison neglects the crucial question of value. What should we ask such a being for and what kinds of goods would such a being promote?

Traditional theism imposes some boundaries for what the divine being might be like, but, taken generically, underspecifies the nature of goodness and the purpose of creation, making challenges and defenses of petitionary prayer hard to evaluate from a pure theist perspective (whatever that might be). Different religious movements within “traditional theism” offer strikingly different accounts of what to pray for and why, offering further reason for detailed engagement with specific theological traditions. In the context of the problem of evil, Marilyn Adams pointed out the problems with trying to use a religion-neutral value theory and showed the importance of using the understanding of divine power and goodness employed by the religion under examination.¹⁸ Her point applies to discussions of petitionary prayer as well. Unfortunately, which sorts of things are valuable and appropriate objects of prayer is left in the background and only comes up implicitly via the examples given. Davison's approach is, here, representative of the general emphasis in contemporary philosophy of religion on metaphysics and epistemology over value theory. A defense of petitionary prayer should be evaluated on whether it successfully defends the sort of requests that are central to the theological practices of the religion in question (e.g. asking God for forgiveness), *not* on whether it can defend all sorts of requests to any sort of divine being (e.g. asking the Man Upstairs to help you win the lottery). To evaluate defenses or challenges, we need to know more about what the relevant theology takes to be valuable and why.

This problem of value is connected to issues about the object of prayer. Davison leaves specific discussion of the objects of prayer until chapter 8, meaning that this distinction is only employed after he has gone over most of the challenges and responses.¹⁹ There he divides prayer into self-directed and other-person directed petitionary prayer. Note that this misses the importance of prayers that are not for specific individuals but rather for communities (e.g. for the church, the nation, or the world as a whole) things that, in many theologies, are not reducible to collections of individuals.

Davison then introduces the category of direct divine goods: “those things that God alone can provide, and must provide directly.”²⁰ Davison's examples include God's forgiveness and God's peace, but he also includes God's special assistance (e.g. God helping you force open a door when your building is on fire).²¹ This mixes up goods that constitutively involve the divine (e.g. the peace of God) with those that only involve God as an efficient cause: you may only be able to open the door with God's help, but

Spirituum” and “*De Distinctione Verarum Visionum a falsis*” (The Catholic University of America Press, 1959)). For discussion of the ways in which medieval women mystics worked to establish themselves as trustworthy discerners of God's voice see Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York Medieval Press, 1999), Naoë K. Yoshikawa, “The Making of The Book of Margery Kempe: The Issue of *Discretio Spirituum* Reconsidered”, *English Studies* 92, no. 2 (2011), Grazia Mangano Ragazzi, *Obeying the truth: Discretion in the Spiritual Writings of Saint Catherine of Siena* (OUP, 2014). On the relevance of spiritual senses to contemporary philosophy of religion see William J. Wainwright, “The Spiritual Senses in Western Spirituality and the Analytic Philosophy of Religion”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3, no. 1 (2011) and Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (CUP, 2014).

18 Marilyn McCord Adams, “Problems of Evil: More Advice to Christian Philosophers,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 5 no. 2 (1988).

19 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 138–140.

20 *Ibid.*, 138.

21 *Ibid.*, 139.

the good of opening the door is not a spiritual good nor is it directly about God. Davison also does not discuss how this distinction fits with theological views on what's valuable or on appropriate objects of prayer.

A more promising distinction is the traditional one between temporal goods, external things such as health and wealth that are valuable for carrying out certain activities but are separate from the person herself, and spiritual goods or goods of the soul, the intrinsic excellences (or lack thereof) of the human being herself. This distinction plays a role in a number of religious traditions. To see its relevance for prayer, consider the following instruction from the Presbyterian Book of Order for worship. The congregation is instructed to make:

*earnest supplication for the pardon of sin, and peace with God, through the blood of the atonement, with all its important and happy fruits; for the Spirit of sanctification, and abundant supplies of the grace that is necessary to the discharge of our duty; for support and comfort, under all the trials to which we are liable, as we are sinful and mortal; and for all temporal mercies that may be necessary in our passage through this valley of tears; always remembering to view them as flowing in the channel of covenant love, and intended to be subservient to the preservation and progress of the spiritual life.*²²

The theology behind this passage clearly takes spiritual goods (pardon, peace, the grace of the spirit) to be the primary objects of prayer. The instructions suggest that things such as health and wealth may be asked for insofar as they are “necessary in our passage,” but need to be seen as “subservient” to the spiritual life and should be expected only in limited measure, given that this life is a “valley of tears.” The role prayers for material welfare play in such a theology (and the way they would need to be dealt with in a defense) is quite different than their role in a theology on which the divine being cares about material goods at least as much as spiritual ones.

Theological values are also relevant to Davison's epistemological challenge in chapter 4 about whether we could know that our prayers are answered. Davison suggests that beliefs about answered prayer fail to meet Duncan Pritchard's criterion of safety. On the safety view, I can only know something if I formed my belief about it in a way that consistently leads to the truth. If I believe that my students like me because they laugh at my jokes, my belief does not amount to knowledge. Even if, in fact, they are laughing at my jokes because they like me, they could easily be laughing for some other reason (e.g. to get in my good books or simply to avoid awkwardness). Safety requires that “in most nearby possible worlds in which the agent forms her belief on the same basis as she does in the actual world, her belief continues to be true,” a condition my belief fails to meet.²³ Davison thinks beliefs about prayer are not safe. Say I pray to be given a job and do in fact get the job: can I know that my prayer has been answered? Even if my prayer did happen to play a role in God's bringing this about, Davison worries that God could easily have arranged my employment for other reasons or could have decided not to answer my request for this job.²⁴ To evaluate this worry about safety, we again need to know about the goods being asked for as well as the background theology.

On theologies that distinguish between temporal and spiritual goods, petitioners may be in a much better epistemic situation when it comes to requests for spiritual goods. Goods such as forgiveness, assurance of pardon, and conviction of wrongdoing are things that would come from God and that would come in response to prayer, suggesting that beliefs that one's prayers for such goods have been answered would be safe if true.²⁵ By contrast, my belief that Manchester United's victories are brought about in response to my prayers is not safe. Even if, for some reason, God did arrange things so as to secure their victory in answer to my prayer, God could easily not have (i.e. there are nearby possible worlds in which this victory would either not happen or not happen because of my prayer). Skepticism seems appropriate where there are no theological reasons to think that what happens is something that God loves to bring

22 *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*, Sixth edition, 52–2-d.

23 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 70; cf. Ernest Sosa, “How to Defeat Opposition to Moore”, *Noûs* 33, no. 13 (1999), Duncan Pritchard, “Sensitivity, Safety, and Anti-Luck Epistemology”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. John Greco (OUP, 2008).

24 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 72–74.

25 Cf. Cohoe, “God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer”, 42–45.

about in response to prayer (indeed, many theologies would give me reason to think that the success of my favored team is not an appropriate object of prayer). By contrast, if, as a Christian, I pray to God for support and comfort or for the pardon of sin and then feel support and comfort or the pardon of sin, then, if such a God exists, I could know I have received these things from God. If the Christian God exists, it is very unlikely that I would experience support and comfort only as a psychological illusion or an entirely coincidental by-product. God would be responsive to my entreaties, not only seemingly responsive. Thus my beliefs about answered prayer would be safe if true.

If, moreover, second-personal knowledge and relationship between God and humans is the goal of practices such as prayer, as Eleonore Stump argues, then you would expect many of those in such relationships to meet the epistemological conditions brought up by Davison.²⁶ I know my wife well enough to be in a good position to know when she did something because I asked her and when she didn't, whereas the beliefs of someone with only third personal information about my wife might be unsafe or insufficiently discriminating, since they are based on things such as inferences and conjecture, not on directly tracking her intentions in the way that beliefs based on second-personal knowledge arguably do. If a trained and spiritually mature believer comes to know God in that personal way, that might provide access to knowledge about when God is or is not acting in response to prayer. Of course, as noted, evaluating defenses in this area would require engaging with a more determinate theology.

The distinction between spiritual and temporal goods is also relevant to when prayer would be required. Davison suggests that God would not require prayer for something if the person in question does not believe that prayer is necessary or see how it would help.²⁷ This could affect the importance of prayer: if the best goods can be secured without prayer then prayer is either unnecessary or of only secondary importance. Again, however, we need to examine the kind of good in question: maybe prayer is not always required for temporal goods such as wealth or physical health, but is typically required for spiritual goods. If the human good is found primarily in spiritual goods and the best of these cannot be achieved without God's help and all of them can be achieved much more easily with God's help, prayer would have a significant and valuable role to play in the good life.²⁸ This also applies to the distinction Davison makes between permission-required goods, "good things that one person should not provide to another unless the other person provides some kind of permission," and those that are not permission-required.²⁹ He thinks that prayer may be required only for permission-required goods. What does this imply about the value of prayer? Again, this depends on whether the most important goods are permission-required. If spiritual goods (forgiveness, divine grace etc.) are both permission-required goods and the most valuable, then prayer might truly be important even if many goods can be received in the absence of prayer (such as bodily health) and there are some things people pray for that are not appropriate or defensible (such as another Manchester United league title).

The way Davison conceptualizes the petitioner raises another methodological issue. Davison, "for the sake of simplicity and clarity," focuses on "individual petitioners rather than groups."³⁰ He sets up his inquiry to address the question of whether my individual instance of prayer will make a contrastive difference to what happens. But, on many theological views, this is the wrong approach. If prayer is primarily a communal activity, framing the inquiry around the difference made by token prayers given by particular individuals is the wrong way to proceed, just as asking whether this individual football player won or lost the game is the wrong line of inquiry. You want to determine how the team's actions as a whole won or lost the game (which takes into account the contributions of all the players, but in a holistic way, not a simple addition of individual attributes and actions). A theological example of the holistic approach comes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which claims that intercessory prayers are

26 Eleonore Stump, "Petitionary Prayer", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1979); cf. Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (OUP, 2010), chapter 4.

27 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 153.

28 Cf. Cohoe, "God, Causality, and Petitionary Prayer", 42–45.

29 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 138.

30 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 8.

“an expression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays looks ‘not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.’”³¹ The offering of prayer is here seen primarily as the activity of the whole community, not of a particular individual. Similarly, when it comes to the objects of petition, the Catechism instructs Catholics that “we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming.”³² Note, again, that the focus is primarily on the well being of the whole community: the community of believers united across space and time through which the world is being transformed. In this theological context, the relevant question seems to be whether the prayers of the church, as a whole, are efficacious in helping to promote union and love of God in the church and bringing about God’s will to earth. The significance of prayer is not primarily a question of whether my individual instance of prayer is effective and decisive on its own.

Of course, on some theologies, prayer may principally involve people securing their own individual goods through particular requests, but this reflects certain theological and philosophical views, it is not a neutral default. The more holistic approach has not been sufficiently explored. Work needs to be done on applying the philosophy of collective action and responsibility to prayer, both metaphysically (what sort of unity would the church need to have to serve as the agent of prayer? What kind of common intention does there need to be between individuals for the prayers of various individual believers to causally function as a unified entity?) and epistemically (how could one know that one’s prayers contribute to a whole that is causally efficacious, if one’s prayers are just a small part of a greater whole?) Here the literature on petitionary prayer needs to be enriched by drawing on ecclesiology and collective action instead of pursuing the question atomistically.

Chapters 6–8 examine other goods which advocates of petitionary prayer appeal to in their defenses, such as healthy friendship with God (so that there are some things God only gives in the context of relationship) or responsibility for contributing to the good (so that by bringing things about through prayer God allows us to be responsible for more of the good in the world). Davison questions whether the value added to the world by such friendship or responsibility is sufficient to make receiving goods contingent on prayers. Throughout Davison engages carefully and fairly with his interlocutors but, again, the failure to be clear from the beginning about what sort of goods we are talking about limits the conclusions that can be drawn. Chapter 9–10 conclude by summarizing Davison’s views on which sorts of defenses are available for which sorts of prayer and the practical implications of his theory. Davison suggests that several sorts of petitionary practices of prayer are defensible, but that there are stronger grounds for defending self-directed prayer, since here one can appeal to autonomy, the idea that God might respect the choices we make by providing certain goods only once we give permission.³³

Davison notes that his “conclusions are very tentative” and looks forward “to learning more about challenges and defenses from others who can see more clearly those things that I find puzzling.”³⁴ I join him in hoping for further illuminating work on petitionary prayer, a topic whose challenging puzzles are deeply rooted in human spiritual experience.

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31 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Prayer of Intercession, 2635.

32 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Prayer of Petition, 2632.

33 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 165.

34 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 169, 170.

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