

# PETITIONARY PRAYER: WANTING TO CHANGE THE MIND OF THE BEING WHO KNOWS BEST

Allison Krile Thornton

**Abstract:** On the standard understanding of petitionary prayer, the purpose of prayer is to make a difference to what God will do. In this article, I offer a novel argument that such an activity doesn't make sense.

## 1 Introduction

Suppose that petitionary prayer is a kind of request made of God, an attempt to make a difference to what God will do.<sup>1</sup> As such, it faces the challenges that trying to make a difference to what God will do faces: if God is—as standard theism suggests—impassible and immutable and infallibly knowledgeable about the future, then making a difference to God seems to involve affecting the impassible, changing the immutable, or making false what someone infallibly knows to be the case. These challenges raise doubts about whether it is possible for God to answer our prayers. In this paper I raise a different problem for petitionary prayer. The problem is not that it seems God *cannot* answer petitionary prayer, but rather that it seems incoherent for us to *want* him to.

Let me clarify. For ease of discussion, let us say that the target of a petitionary prayer is the token event (or events) prayed for, and that a petitionary prayer is answered only if the target of the prayer occurs.<sup>2</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup> Though not everyone will grant this point, of course, (see Luther, Calvin, Aquinas, Phillips), we are in good company in making such an assumption. Petitionary prayer is widely assumed to be “fundamentally a request made of God for something specific believed to be good by the one praying” Stump (1979: 81), “[prayer] for particular things” Davison 2009: 286, and “supplicatory activity” Flint (1998: 200). It is assumed that we make petitionary prayers “to ask God for things” (Flint 1998: 213) and “in the sense that [we] ask [God] to bring about some state of affairs which [we] believe may not have occurred without divine intervention” (Basinger (1983: 25). The view that prayer “[makes] a difference to God [and is] at least a factor in his decision as to how he will act” is “surely the view that the vast majority of Christians, both past and present, would endorse” (Flint 1998: 222); “[t]he fact that our asking God to do something can make a difference to what he does underwrites the point of petitionary prayer” (Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010). One prays “in the hope that one’s request will be granted, and in the belief that some such requests, at least, are efficacious.” (Hoffman 1985: 21). Moreover, that in prayer we try to make a difference to what God will do is an explicit assumption of those who argue that petitionary prayer can be effective, like Parker and Rettler (2017), and is at least implicit in the work of those who question the possibility that petitionary prayer gives God reasons to act, like Davison (2009), and those who defend that possibility, like Howard-Snyder (2010) and Pruss (2013).

<sup>2</sup> The list of jointly sufficient conditions is plausibly longer than this (hence “only if” instead of “if and only if”) including, for example, a condition stipulating a non-deviant connection

target of a petitionary prayer will occur (a) in all the possible futures that satisfice (that is, are good enough for God to create, actualize, bring about, etc.) or (b) in none of the possible futures that satisfice or (c) some but not all of the possible futures that satisfice. I'll adopt a contrived vocabulary for the ease of discussion by describing targets of type (a) as good, targets of type (b) as bad, and targets of type (c) as neutral, and I'll refer to possible futures simply as 'futures'. We may not have sufficient reason to believe of a target that it is good, bad, or neutral, though it's safe to assume that God does.

With those assumptions in place, consider the following cursory argument to put the problem in relief. A petitionary prayer—as an attempt to make a difference to God—is either superfluous (in the cases in which the target of the prayer occurring is assumed to be good) or incoherent (in the cases in which the target of the prayer occurring is assumed to be bad or neutral). The reason for the first disjunct is that an omnibenevolent and omnipotent person ensures that good (or at least: good enough) events occur. That is, in deciding which worlds or futures to actualize, God selects from among those that satisfice. And on the assumed definition of “good target”, if a target is good, it occurs in all of God's options. The reason for the second disjunct is that if an event is assumed to be bad, it is *ipso facto* an event we want not to occur (at least: we do not want it without also wanting it not to occur), so it is incoherent to want to bring it about. And if a state of affairs is assumed to be neutral, it is *ipso facto* a state of affairs we have no reason to want to occur. At least, we have none of the right reasons for wanting it to occur. There may be value to wanting a state of affairs to occur, but this value is tangential to the value of the state of affairs. Reasons for wanting something based on the value of wanting that something are not the reasons I'm looking at; I'm looking at reasons for wanting something based on the value of that something itself. The general idea is that attempting to make a difference to God is like advising Bach as he composes a fugue. If your advice is good, he doesn't need it; if your advice is bad, he knows better; and if your advice is neutral, you have no reason to give it.

Here's the master argument in brief:

1. The target of every petitionary prayer is good, bad, or neutral.
2. If the target of a petitionary prayer is good, that prayer is superfluous.
3. If the target of a petitionary prayer is bad, that prayer is incoherent.
4. If the target of a petitionary prayer is neutral, that prayer is incoherent.

---

between the prayer and God answering it, but such details are difficult to pin down (see Davison (2009, 2011)) and irrelevant to the thesis at hand.

5. So, every petitionary prayer is either superfluous or incoherent.  
[From 1-4]

Each premise needs further explication and defense. In the second through fourth sections of this paper, I'll argue for premises 2-4 in turn.

But first I will register three disclaimers.

First: what this objection to petitionary prayer does not address is whether it is beneficial to make such prayers or whether, all things considered, it's something we ought to do. Even if what I press in the objection is compelling, other dimensions of petitionary prayer may make it a worthwhile activity.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, petitionary prayer has many benefits. By making petitionary prayers, for example, we stand to improve morally: petitioning helps us recognize God as the author of our goods,<sup>4</sup> learn God's will,<sup>5</sup> build our communities,<sup>6</sup> and strike a balance in our relationship with God between being slavish and spoiled.<sup>7</sup> We also stand to expand our moral agency: petitioning allows us to be more responsible for our and others' actions,<sup>8</sup> be in a partnership with God,<sup>9</sup> and extend the reach of our love.<sup>10</sup> I will not engage the arguments about whether petitionary prayer in fact has these benefits, and I will not engage the arguments (or declarations) about whether such benefits outweigh the apparent costs of the institution of petitionary prayer, like that sometimes goods are not provided because they were not requested. Thus, I set aside the benevolence problem for petitionary prayer (a.k.a. "the problem of petitionary prayer"<sup>11</sup>), the problem of identifying good enough benefits of petitionary prayer that it seems to be no knock on God's goodness that he established the institution.

Second: another claim I will not dispute here is whether it is possible for us to make a difference to what God does. In particular, I will not dispute

---

<sup>3</sup> See Basinger (1983) for a critical discussion about how authors have attempted to defend that claim, and Smith (2013) and Davison (2014: Section 4) for surveys of the same.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas *ST* II, Q83, A2. C.F. Meyers' and Murray's (1994) and Murray's (2004) contention that petitionary prayer prevents idolatry.

<sup>5</sup> Meyers and Murray (1994)

<sup>6</sup> Meyers and Murray (1994)

<sup>7</sup> Stump (1979), whose worry is that without the institution of petitionary prayer, a cooperative relationship with God—omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good—might overwhelm us—fallible, finite, and imperfect—in one of two ways: either we could become "a slavish follower who slowly loses all sense of his own tastes and desires and will" (87) or "tyrannical, willful, indolent, self-indulgent, and the like" (87).

<sup>8</sup> Swinburne (1998)

<sup>9</sup> Smith and Yip (2010)

<sup>10</sup> Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010), Choi (2016)

<sup>11</sup> So called by Basinger (1983), Murray and Meyers (1994), Flint (1998), Smith and Yip (2010), Smith (2013). Stump (1979) and others call benevolence problem a problem for petitionary prayer. Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder's (2010) "puzzle of petitionary prayer" is more like what I call "the influence problem" below, but they recognize a connection between their puzzle and the benevolence problem, and they address the benevolence problem in Sections V-VII of their essay. Davison (2009: 292) calls the benevolence problem "the divine goodness problem", but frames it like this, also connecting it to the influence problem: "[T]here seems to be no reason to expect the God of traditional theism not to bring about some specific good just because no prayers were offered for it. But if God would have brought about the good things for which people prayed anyway, even if prayers had not been offered, then [...] God's actions do not count as answers to those prayers [...] Let us call this 'the divine goodness problem' of petitionary prayer."

that we can give God reasons or create obligations for him by requesting things of him. Those claims have been the subject of significant controversy in discussions of petitionary prayer, and I do not wish to add to the controversy.<sup>12</sup> In fact, I will grant that our petitionary prayers can give God reasons and that giving God reasons is a way of influencing God. Thus, I set aside the influence problem for petitionary prayer.

Third: I will not address the pair of concerns that we cannot be justified in believing that any particular prayers have ever been answered, and that if we cannot be justified in believing that any particular prayers have been answered, many of the solutions to the benevolence and influence problems fail.<sup>13</sup> The problem I have in mind holds whether or not we can know that prayers are answered. Thus, I set aside the epistemic problem for petitionary prayer.

Together, the three problems just mentioned—the benevolence problem, the influence problem, and the epistemic problem—almost entirely exhaust the focus of recent debates about petitionary prayer. Here I advance a new challenge: forgetting about whether petitionary prayer itself adds value, assuming that our prayers do give God reasons, and bracketing concerns about whether we can know of any prayer that it was answered, how can it make sense for us, fallible and flawed, even to *want* to influence God, all-good and omniscient?<sup>14</sup>

## 2 If the target of a petitionary prayer is good, that prayer is superfluous.

Suppose that the target of your petitionary prayer is good. That is (given the operative definition of ‘good’), suppose that it occurs in all of the futures that satisfice. Either there is a best possible future or there is not. If there is a best possible future and the target of your prayer occurs there (as our assumption that the target is good implies), then the event you are praying for will occur in the actual future. If there is a best future, then

---

<sup>12</sup> Not today at least. For the debate, see Flint (1998), Davison (2009), Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010), Davison (2011), Pruss (2013), and Parker and Rettler (2017). For the account of how requests generate moral reasons that the Howard-Snyders employ, see Cupit (1994).

<sup>13</sup> For a defense of the first claim, see Basinger (2004) and Davison (2009: Section 5). For a case against the first claim, see Murray (2004: 264-265) and Pruss (2013: 16-20). For a debate about the second claim, see the exchange between Davison (2009: Section 6), Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010: Section V), and Davison (2011). Davison defends the second claim; the Howard-Snyders reject it.

<sup>14</sup> This problem is not entirely novel, though it is underappreciated and underexplored. I think that the problem I’m addressing is one that Davison mentions in a footnote:

Petitionary prayer sometimes gives the appearance of offering God advice about what to do, reminding God about a situation, or trying to explain to God why God should care about someone. All of these things would make sense if another human being were the object of such petitions, but God’s complete knowledge of every situation and perfect love for everyone involved make them inappropriate. So the more clearly one thinks about the nature of God, the more general one’s petitionary prayers become, and then the less clear it is whether or not one’s prayers make a difference. I call this ‘the puzzle of particularity’. (Davison (2009: 301))

surely that's the one that God brings about. In that case, your prayer is superfluous since if the target of your prayer occurs in the best possible future, God needs no further reason—such as the fact that you petition—to bring it about. If instead there is no best possible future but there are multiple futures that satisfy and (according to our assumption) the target of your prayer occurs in all of them, your prayer is likewise superfluous. For if God creates, he will choose from among the futures that satisfy regardless of whether you ask him to. So if the target of your prayer occurs in the optimal future or in all the sub-optimal futures that satisfy, your prayer is superfluous.

The following example illustrates my point. Suppose you broke your arm. You would like to recover fully, but before you attempt to bring it about, you might ask yourself, “What would *God* like for me?” knowing that what God wants for you is a function of both his omniscience and his love for you and consequently is truly what is best for you. After all, God knows what your preferences are, what your weaknesses and strengths are, what you need to flourish, etc., and he has perfect love for you. There is no surer way to find out what is good for you than to find out what God's preferences are with respect to you. Thus, your preference for recovery should be provisional, contingent on whatever God's preferences are. Likewise, the best way to find out what is overall good is to find out what God's preferences for the world are. For God knows and loves not only you, but everyone else as well, and he knows the most just and loving balance of people getting what they want and not getting what they want. If every future that satisfies God's preferences includes your recovery, then your preference for recovery stands. But in that case, it doesn't make sense to request to recover. At least, the request would be superfluous. All the futures that God will choose from include your recovery. As Eleonore Stump put a similar objection to some petitionary prayers, “Why ask for something that is certain to come whether you beg for it or flee from it?”<sup>15</sup>

It might be objected that it's possible that the best future (or all of the satisfying futures) include not only the target but also your prayer for it. In case that is the case, the objection goes, we ought to pray, because God's preferences include that we pray. I grant the normative claim, but I deny that prayer in such a case is properly petitionary or petitionary in the request-making sense we supposed at the outset.

Here's why. Generally, when we make requests, what we aim to do is give the requestee a reason to do what was requested, and the sort of prayer under review is the sort aimed at giving God reasons to do what was requested. In fact, it is the sort of prayer that we cannot make while thinking that it won't make any difference to whether God does what we request. As Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010) argue, “in general,

---

<sup>15</sup> Stump (1979: 83)

our words do not constitute the speech act of petitioning if we think that our words won't make any difference to whether the petitioned does what we ask." In light of this, under the assumption that the best or God-preferred futures include a prayer's target, a prayer cannot be properly petitionary because, assuming we are reasonable and paying attention, we will think of that prayer that it will not make a difference to whether God does what we ask. *Ex hypothesi*, God is going to do it no matter what. The prayer might seem petitionary, or have the same verbal shape as a petition, but it would not in fact be or constitute a petition. So even if the best future or all the satisficing futures include you asking for something, your asking cannot constitute a petition as long as you assume that the target of your prayer is good.

Even if the above account of petitioning is flawed and it is possible to petition while thinking that our words won't make a difference to whether the petitioned does what we ask, petitionary prayers made for targets assumed to be good are extremely unusual. Most parties to the debate on petitionary prayer agree that at least almost all of the time the hope we have in making petitionary prayers is that they are efficacious, that they at least "factor in [God's] decision as to how he will act".<sup>16</sup> That our prayers can make a difference to what God does "underwrites the point of petitionary prayer".<sup>17</sup> This is why the influence problem is at the center of the debate. To solve the problem, it is argued that our prayers can influence God by making a difference for what the best thing for God to do is.<sup>18</sup> Suppose, for example, you want it to rain. And suppose that without any prayers for rain, God has just as much reason to make it rain as not to. Now suppose you pray for rain. In doing so, it seems, you give God one more reason to make it rain (or so this solution to the influence problem goes; let's grant it). Your prayer has changed what is best for God to do. And this seems to be a power of petitionary prayers generally—they alter the landscape of divine preferences. On this understanding of petitionary prayer, the point of petitioning is to do something such that having done it, it's better for the petition's target to occur than not. But on the assumption that the target of a prayer is good—that is, that the best or God-preferred futures already include the target of that prayer—the prayer fails to be a difference-making exercise in the sense just described. Those prayers do not shape the landscape of divine preferences with respect to their targets. Does that render all such prayers unimportant? Of course not; especially not under the assumption that every satisficing world includes such prayers. But is it incorrect to think of such prayers that they make a difference to God? Yes. And that makes those prayers—namely, the ones

---

<sup>16</sup> Flint (1998: 222)

<sup>17</sup> Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010: 43). See also everyone cited in the first footnote of this paper.

<sup>18</sup> See especially Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010: Sections II-III)

that do not alter the landscape of divine preferences regarding their targets—not the prayers that have been at the focus of the recent debate on petitionary prayer.

It might be thought that we pray to avoid the satisficing futures in which the target doesn't occur in case there are any such futures. But as I'll discuss in the following two sections, if there are satisficing futures in which the target of your prayer does not occur, it is not reasonable to want the target to occur.

### **3 If the target of a petitionary prayer is bad, that prayer is incoherent.**

Suppose that the target of your petitionary prayer is bad. That is, suppose it occurs in none of the futures that are good enough for God to create. In that case, you should not want the target of your prayer to occur, or at least you should not want it enough to pursue it. You may still want the bad thing to some degree, but upon assuming that it occurs in no futures that are good enough for God—who loves you and is omniscient—to create, you should acquire an overriding desire for the bad thing not to occur. Thus, to the extent that it is incoherent to try to bring about what you know to be bad, it is incoherent to pray for what you know to be bad. Futures in which such a target occurs are futures you would do well not to convince God to bring about. You don't—or you shouldn't anyway—want to do that.

Even if you really, really want to recover from some injury, you should maintain that if God thought it would be bad for you to be healed, then you would want *not* to recover more than you would want to recover. Perhaps God wants you not to recover because if you were to recover from your injury, you would not be in a position to depend on your family, with whom, by depending on them instead of recovering, you end long-standing rifts and develop deep friendships. And perhaps without that, you would have lived out your life so miserably that such a future would not satisfice. Perhaps not. But what we can be confident in is that if God prefers that you not recover, it is for the better. In that case, it does not make sense to try to bring about a future in which you do recover.

### **4 If the target of a petitionary prayer is neutral, that prayer is incoherent.**

Possibly the target of your prayer occurs in some but not all of the futures that satisfice. For example, if the target of your prayer is that you recover, it may be that there are some good enough futures in which you do recover

and some good enough futures in which you don't. My contention is that you have no good reason to try to change God's mind about which of those futures to create or actualize. That is, you have no good reason to try to get God to prefer a future in which the target occurs to the futures in which it doesn't. In fact, you have good reason not to try.

There are a few ways that the target of your prayer can be neutral in the sense I've stipulated above. First, God could prefer futures in which the target does not occur to futures in which it does occur, even though both target-occurs futures and target-does-not-occur futures satisfy. For example, God could prefer futures in which you do not recover to futures in which you do, even though futures of both sorts satisfy. In that case, you should not pray for the target because the non-target futures are objectively preferable.

The second way the target of your prayer could be neutral is that God could have no preference between the satisficing futures in which the target occurs and futures in which it does not occur. For example, he could be neutral with respect to whether you recover. In that case, and in the interest of aligning your preferences with those of the supremely rational and loving being, you should acquire overriding neutrality towards the target. But this comes at the cost of having a reason to pursue the target. You might think that desire for your recovery, for instance, serves as a tie-breaker when God's attitude towards your recovery is neutral. But God's neutrality towards the target occurring has already factored in your particular desires and the value to fulfilling them. And even doing so, it is, we are assuming, objectively no better for you to recover than not to recover. When outcomes are equally good like that, the rational thing to do when choosing between them is to choose at random. But if we assume that God himself would choose at random, what good reason do you have to try to bring about one outcome over the other?<sup>19</sup>

It might be objected that "our asking others to do something can change the moral status of their doing it."<sup>20</sup> In other words, it might be objected that we have a solution to the influence problem (or at least, that we agreed at the outset to assume that we did), and so we can assume our prayers can alter which futures are preferable. The idea is that even if right now at  $t_0$  it is not preferable that you recover, you can say a prayer at  $t_1$  such that at  $t_2$  it *is* preferable that you recover. So if you want to do things to bring about your recovery, pray, making it better for you to recover than not. That way God will help you out.

This objection presumes a verdict on precisely what is under dispute: namely whether, given certain facts about what is objectively preferable, we should want to bring about a certain target. The question is not whether doing so is possible. The question is whether doing so is a good

---

<sup>19</sup> More specifically: what reasons do you have that are not tangential to the value of the target occurring? Those are the ones we're interested in.

<sup>20</sup> (Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder (2010: 47))



idea. Precisely what I maintain is that in some circumstances, we don't have enough reason to try to bring about a certain target, including by means of altering divine preferences. These are the circumstances: circumstances in which when God surveys all of the satisficing futures compatible with how things have gone up to  $t_0$ , he has no preference between the futures in which the target occurs and futures in which it does not occur. Included in his survey are the futures in which you pray at  $t_1$  and the futures in which you do not pray at  $t_1$ . Even so, we are currently stipulating, he is neutral with respect to whether the target occurs. Even if, given that you pray at  $t_1$ , a future (relative to  $t_1$ ) in which your prayer is answered is preferable to one in which it is not, it does not follow that a future (relative to  $t_0$ ) in which you pray at  $t_1$  is preferable to one in which you don't pray at  $t_1$ . In other words, it doesn't follow that it's preferable to do something such that it becomes objectively better for the target of my prayer to occur. The question to ask at  $t_0$  is this: what reason do I have to try to bring about this target? Assuming that the target is neutral in the sense that it is objectively no better for it to occur than not, the answer is: no reason. And— unless there is some value in changing divine preferences—'no reason' is the right answer even if prayer *can* change the moral status of the prayer's target occurring.

What if there is some value in changing divine preferences? More precisely, what if the futures in which you pray and your prayer is answered are better than all of the alternatives: futures in which you pray and the target of your prayer does not occur, futures in which you don't pray but the target in question does occur, and futures in which you don't pray and the target in question does not occur. In this case, you should pray. But take note: if a petitionary prayer makes sense only under the assumption that the preferred futures include that prayer, then that prayer is difference-making only in a limited sense. When you pray under that assumption, your prayer is not primarily an exercise in making some futures better than others, but is a response to the facts about what futures are better (specifically, it's a response to the fact that the futures that include your prayer are better than all of the alternatives). Prayers like these do not primarily—or at least, do not merely—change the landscape of divine preferences in order to make it more likely for their target to occur. They respond to the landscape of divine preferences as it already is. Moreover, it is not merely the value of the target that makes certain target-futures preferable; it is also the value of praying. That doesn't mean it's incoherent to pray in these circumstances. But it might mean that prayer in these circumstances is not exactly how we usually think of it. It also suggests that without any reason to believe that petitionary prayer is a part of futures God prefers, it wouldn't make much sense to pray. In other words, it suggests that without either an answer to the benevolence problem or a command to pray, it doesn't make much sense to pray. There are, of

course, extensive attempts to answer the benevolence problem and clear commands (from within the Christian tradition anyway) to pray. My point is to emphasize the importance of those attempts and commands. Independently of them, petitioning doesn't seem like a good idea.<sup>21</sup>

The final way the target of your prayer could be neutral is that God could prefer futures in which the target does occur to futures in which it does not occur, even though both target-occurs futures and target-does-not occur futures satisfy. In this case, unlike in the first two, it is reasonable to maintain your attitude of preference towards the futures in which you recover, for example, but nevertheless, it doesn't make sense to try to influence by request which kind of future God brings about. Either God will choose a target-occurs futures anyway or (only if he is capable of choosing a future to which he prefers an alternative—a significantly contentious assumption) he will choose another future, a future that is good enough for him. And if a future is good enough for God, it should be good enough for you. Given that God is omniscient and loves you perfectly, there seems to be insufficient reason to try to influence God with respect to what futures to create or actualize. In fact, the fact that you aren't omniscient and perfectly loving is a reason not to try to influence God.

## 5 Conclusion

I am not saying that we should not pray. Rather, I'm saying that either our prayers are superfluous or we should not, when we think about it, want God to answer them—at least, not without also counting on the value of something other than the target of your prayer, namely praying itself. I disagree with Stump (1979) that “[I]t is hard to imagine anyone putting himself in such a relation [i.e. a relation of sharing thoughts and feelings and the like] to a person he believes to be omnipotent and good without also *asking* for whatever help he needs.” I actually find it quite easy to imagine being in that situation. All I have to do is also imagine remembering that the person I have a relation to knows far better than I do what the better thing to do is.

What does all of this suggest? Is it that the attitude to take when considering what one wants is deference to the preferences of God? Any form of requesting seems superfluous or incoherent. But this renders

---

<sup>21</sup> As Stump (1979: 83) points out when discussing prayers for events that are certain to come: “It is no answer to [questions about whether it makes sense to pray] to say, as some theologians have done, that one prays in this way just because Jesus prescribed such a prayer. That attempt at an answer simply transfers responsibility for the futile action from the one praying to the one being prayed to; it says nothing about what sense there is in the prayer itself.” Similarly, I think, saying that we pray in certain circumstances because we have a command to pray or because God wants us to just transfers responsibility for the unmotivated action from the one praying to the one being prayed to. It says nothing about what sense there is in the prayer itself. So I don't think commands to pray are enough to make sense of praying.

petitionary prayer insensible—insofar as it is a request, which is how almost everyone thinks of it—on its own. The options, then, are to reject my arguments for the superfluity or incoherence of prayer or to deny that petitionary prayer is properly a request.<sup>22</sup>

#### References:

- Allen, R. T. “On not understanding prayer.” *Sophia* 10, no. 3 (1971): 1-7.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologicae* II-II.83.2.
- Basinger, David. “Why petition an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good God?.” *Religious Studies* 19, no. 1 (1983): 25-41.
- Basinger, David. “Petitionary prayer: a response to Murray and Meyers.” *Religious studies* 31, no. 4 (1995): 475-484.
- Basinger, David. “God does not necessarily respond to prayer.” *W: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Michael L. Peterson i Raymond J. VanArragon 255 (2004): 264.
- Brümmer, Vincent. *What are we doing when we pray?: on prayer and the nature of faith*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008.
- Choi, Isaac. “Is Petitionary Prayer Superfluous?.” *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* 7 (2016): 32.
- Cupit, Geoffrey. “How requests (and promises) create obligations.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-) 44, no. 177 (1994): 439-455.
- Davison, Scott. “Petitionary Prayer”. In Flint, Thomas P., and Michael Rea, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Davison, Scott A. “On the Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer. Reply to Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3, no. 1 (2011): 227-237.
- Davison, Scott A., “Petitionary Prayer”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/petitionary-prayer/>.
- Flint, Thomas P. *Divine providence: The molinist account*. Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Hoffman, Joshua. “On petitionary prayer.” *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (1985): 21-29.
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel, and Frances Howard-Snyder. “The Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer.” (2010).
- Murray, Michael J., and Kurt Meyers. “Ask and it will be given to you.” *Religious Studies* 30, no. 3 (1994): 311-330.
- Murray, Michael. “God responds to prayer.” (2004).

---

<sup>22</sup> Many thanks to Kevin Timpe, Charles Taliaferro (and others at the Innsbruck Summer School of Analytic Theology in 2014); the Q&A participants at the 2016 SCP Pacific meeting; and Alina Beary, Trent Dougherty, Anne Jeffrey, Blake McAllister, Turner Nevitt, Alex Pruss, Jonathan Reibsmann, Jesse Schupack, and Chris Tweedt.

- Parker, Ryan Matthew, and Bradley Rettler. "A Possible-Worlds Solution to the Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer." (2017).
- Pruss, Alexander R. "Omnirationality." *Res Philosophica* 90, no. 1 (2013): 1-21.
- Stump, Eleonore. "Petitionary prayer." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1979): 81-91.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1998.
- Smith, Nicholas D., and Andrew C. Yip. "Partnership with God: a partial solution to the problem of petitionary prayer." *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 395-410.
- Smith, Nicholas D. "Philosophical Reflection on Petitionary Prayer." *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 3 (2013): 309-317.