

This work by Kendall Walser Cox is interesting, engaging and beautiful. Above I described her work as ‘historical theology’, as she carefully presents the interpretations of these figures without comment. She brings them into conversation with one another, but rarely presents them in explicit conversation with herself. This is a descriptive and not a critical comment. If you would like a fuller understanding of the theology of Karl Barth or Julian of Norwich, then this book provides that alongside a multifaceted lens on the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

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## **William M. Wright, IV, *The Lord’s Prayer: Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the Life of the Church***

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William Wright’s *The Lord’s Prayer. Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the Life of the Church* is the third volume in Baker Academic’s new series of Touchstone Texts, which explores significant biblical passages through theological exposition. According to the series’ preface, such an exposition seeks ‘to set forth the sense of the text in an insightful and compelling fashion while remaining sensitive to its interpretive challenges, potential misunderstandings, and practical difficulties’. This volume does a fine job in meeting the series’ goals while also maintaining a high level of scholarship. Wright makes it clear in his introduction that he has written neither a historical Jesus study nor an attempt at historical reconstruction, but an interpretation of the text as received in the life of the church. This does not mean that he avoids significant historical–critical questions or insights – he avails himself of many contemporary commentaries and resources – but he focuses especially on the given scriptural context of the Lord’s Prayer and the pastoral implications.

The opening chapter outlines the structure of the Matthean and Lukan versions and places them in the context of the scriptures and Jewish prayer traditions. He notably highlights the eschatological significance of the prayer, which becomes a major theme in subsequent chapters. The second chapter then explores the divine name ‘Father’, and each of the remaining chapters examine one of the five petitions of the prayer: (1) may your name be sanctified; (2) may your kingdom come and your will be done; (3) give us daily (today) our daily bread; (4) forgive us as we forgive; and (5) lead us not into trial (temptation) and deliver us from the Evil One (evil). His reduction of the petitions to five, though not unprecedented, stems principally from his theological interpretations and his emphasis on the eschatological import of the prayer.

His exposition of the ‘you’ petitions follows a general pattern of establishing the scriptural context in both the Old and New Testaments, followed by an examination of the theological implications. Addressing God as ‘Father’ echoes biblical themes regarding paternal love, care and guidance, and the need for filial obedience within

the new family that Jesus forms in his disciples. In turn, the disciples sanctify the name – a name that may be identified with the Trinity – through praise and a just way of life. In fact, this petition anticipates the final realisation of God's saving plan, when all will recognise the holiness of God. After noting the importance of God's reign in the scriptures, Wright understands the next two petitions as 'requests for the Father to reveal and realize fully in the world his kingly rule in Christ and so transform the world such that the Father's will, which is now done perfectly in heaven, will be done perfectly in the world' (p. 88). In short, these petitions have ethical implications for the ecclesial community while also directing their hope towards the kingdom's fulfilment.

The 'we' petitions receive similar treatment. The request for bread may designate the need to limit one's possessions and grow in dependence on God, but contextually it suggests both the anticipation of and hope for the eschatological banquet. The forgiveness of debts or sins designates the right response of the disciples to their own experience of divine mercy in Christ. Yet it also points to the future judgment before God. The concluding petitions address the final struggle with the Evil One (Wright argues that the definite article in *tou ponērou* most likely implies the figure of the devil) and the eschatological trials prior to God's ultimate victory. One may see such trials and their resolution already in Christ's struggle in the desert, his passion and the resurrection.

Though Wright does an excellent job in providing a scholarly presentation for a more general audience, I would still offer two critiques. First, in some cases the volume does not sufficiently take into account some major linguistic problems in the texts. For example, in examining the petition 'forgive us our debts', Wright does not adequately consider the peculiar *do ut des* structure in the Greek that implies a 'deal-making' with God: 'forgive us our debts as we too have forgiven our debtors' (Matthew). Though the wider context of the scriptures would suggest that the petitioner must imitate God's mercy, not vice versa (see the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matt 18:23–35), nonetheless the petition's structure has led some theologians to much different conclusions over the centuries (see, for instance, Gregory of Nyssa or Maximus the Confessor). Second, Wright does not take into full account the history of Christian theological interpretation. This, of course, is not possible given the limited scope of the series. Yet expositors ranging from early Christianity to the present offer rich theological insights that would inspire modern pastors. The volumes by C. Clifton Black and Kenneth Stevenson can serve as good companions to Wright's book.

This fine book, though not meant for professional biblical scholars, is an excellent treatment for pastors, teachers in both seminary and parochial settings and the generally interested Christian.

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