

perspectives. This review has not been able to do justice to the main contributions, still less to the respondents. Yet, with regard to the collection as a whole, it may be said that if nothing has been decided, the contributors have nevertheless put down a marker to those who might be tempted to furrow their brows and walk away since it makes it clear that, if they do, they will be abandoning one of contemporary theology's most challenging and productive topics.

George Pattison  
St Monan's, Fife



**Mysteries of the Lord's Prayer: Wisdom from the Early Church**, John Gavin, SJ, The Catholic University of America Press, 2021 (ISBN 9780813233826), xxiv + 168 pp., pb \$24.95

A former Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey once wrote that prayer and life are 'properly inseparable'—that everyday existence is shaped by the way one prays, and vice versa. Ramsey then proceeds to assert that Christian worship is nothing less than 'idoltrous perversion unless it is reflected in compassion towards the world' (*Be Still and Know: A Study in the Life of Prayer* [Fount, 1982], p. 120). The rather timeless point he is making is that proper worship of God is defined by a concomitant concern for the well-being of anything the worshipper can and does encounter, a strong demand that Christians have been living out, and reflecting upon, since almost the very beginning. John Gavin's excellent new book considers the venerable patchwork of patristic reflection on the Lord's prayer as pregnant with such significance for spirituality and ethical action. According to Gavin (who is an associate professor at the College of the Holy Cross), the fathers knew that the 'Christian lives in the world and has received the mission to transform it from within', a posture profoundly 'supernatural' (*Mysteries of the Lord's Prayer*, p. 10) and nourished by the inexhaustible wells of the Lord's words.

Gavin divides his book into eight *aporiai*, or problems, by which to explore with the fathers the spiritual depths of the Lord's prayer. It's an effective and instructive trope that well serves the book's stated aim of demonstrating an invitation to the pray-er to existentially lean into the Lord's prayer (and indeed Scripture more widely), and especially its many difficulties and paradoxes. For example, prompted by the first petition of the Lord's prayer—'Hallowed be thy name'—Gavin asks how it is that the

holy God is supposed to be further hallowed. His answer—with reference here to Peter Chrysologus and Jerome, among others—is that the holiness of God, of his name, is visible in the actions of those who follow him: ‘The Fathers consistently teach that we make God’s name holy through imitation of the divine’ (p. 54). But like the fathers themselves, Gavin knows there is a proper theological order to things, and each *aporia* works up to its ‘patristic’ conclusion with short sections of relevant scriptural or historical detail (cf. pp. 12–15). In the case of the first petition, he has already utilized the work of contemporary scholars to introduce the place of the *tetragrammaton* in ancient Israel (pp. 46–9) and the divine name in the gospels of Matthew and Luke (pp. 49–51) so as to further draw out his leading point regarding the holy and transformative power of the name(s) of God for his people. This all works well.

The kind of retrieval pursued by Gavin, clearly committed as it is to what an earlier generation might have simply branded ‘allegorical’ interpretation, works together with modern historical scholarship. Looking at the third petition, ‘Thy kingdom come’, Gavin variously draws on the work of N.T. Wright, Gerhard Lohfink, and Pope Benedict XVI. This chapter in particular might have benefited from a slightly more thorough interrogation of the differing exegetical conclusions reached by patristic and modern readers of the scriptural text. To be sure, Gavin is quite aware of the different conclusions drawn over the identity of the kingdom: ‘the Fathers, in a clear contradiction with many contemporary interpreters, do not hesitate to identify the kingdom with the persons of the Trinity’ (p. 71), usually either Christ or the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the difference between Wright and Cyprian of Carthage, such as it is, remains a circle that does not need squaring—is a puzzling ‘problem’ of its own—but the wider question of exegetical accuracy is one that some readers will feel should be addressed. However, Gavin’s decision to let faithfully-motivated readings, from whichever century, stand with one another is not wrong either—especially in a work being pitched at the non-specialist.

Overall, Gavin is a clear writer and a judicious interpreter of his sources, which is important considering the wide net he is casting. His central conceit allows him to focus on commonalities that emerge between the diverse patristic authors when considering the questions being posed, and so we find (say) Origen and Evagrius Ponticus sitting alongside Tertullian and Augustine, all of which is informative, edifying, and, indeed, fun to read. Some of the questions can only be called *aporiai* in the loosest sense (Chapter Seven is ‘Why should we seek bread?’—a valid question, although not a logical conundrum). But this does not detract from what Gavin is getting at, nor his success in doing so. In sum, one might reasonably think of this book as an introductory exercise in *ressourcement* for those who do not have the time to go through the likes of de Lubac or Florovsky. Yet, it is worthwhile for its own sake as a

distillation of the fathers' theological and spiritual insight into an approachable and rewarding meditation on the living force of one of Christianity's most ancient prayers. 'Jesus told his followers "to pray like this"', Gavin concludes: 'to pray and live this wondrous compendium of the Gospel that leads to everlasting life' (p. 140).

Alex Michael Trew  
University of Aberdeen



**The Book of Lamentations**, John Goldingay, Eerdmans, 2022 (ISBN 978-0-8028-2542-1), xix + 228 pp., hb \$40

The goal of the New International Commentary on the Old Testament has been to provide a deep understanding of Scripture by scholarship of the highest quality from the perspective of faith seeking understanding. The contributors to the series all agree that the books of the Old Testament are inspired, and the commentators have a high regard for the authority of the Bible. Each commentary in this series aims to lead people to saving faith.

From the 1990s, there has been a vast increase in scholarly interest in the Book of Lamentations. Goldingay's commentary is timely in bringing together much which has been written on the book. The commentary has a detailed introduction which starts by setting Lamentations in the historical context of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC and the destruction of the Temple. This was especially traumatic as this tragedy seemed to undermine Israel's relationship with the Lord. As a result, the people grieved in a similar way to that found in some Psalms and as in other countries in the Ancient Near East.

Together, the five poems of Lamentations show a unity and are well ordered in a way unlike any other book in the Old Testament. Four of the poems appear to be acrostics. Goldingay then gives a helpful discussion of Hebrew poetry and the way this is used in Lamentations through such devices as repetition, terseness, hyperbole, and imagery.

The Book of Lamentations is anonymous, though the LXX credits the work to Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem. This may well be later reflection or guesswork. Even though the attribution to Jeremiah is not historical, it does suggest that the authors might be working with his theological perspective as well as that of Kings and Deuteronomy. The vividness of the poetry suggests that the writer or authors were familiar with the destruction of Jerusalem and scholars are virtually unanimous in agreeing