

The Essence of Prayer *from Prayer by Friedrich Heiler*

- Prayer appears in history in an astonishing multiplicity of forms;
- As the calm collectedness of a devout individual soul, and as the ceremonial liturgy of a great congregation;
- As an original creation of a religious genius, and as an imitation on the part of a simple, average religious person;
- As the spontaneous expression of upspringing religious experiences, and as the mechanical recitation of an incomprehensible formula;
- As bliss and ecstasy of heart, and as painful fulfillment of the law;
- As the involuntary discharge of an overwhelming emotion, and as the voluntary concentration on a religious object;
- As loud shouting and crying, and as still, silent absorption;
- As artistic poetry, and as stammering speech;
- As the flight of the spirit to the supreme Light, and as a cry out of the deep distress of the heart;
- As joyous thanksgiving and ecstatic praise, and as humble supplication for forgiveness and compassion;
- As a childlike entreaty for life, health, and happiness, and as an earnest desire for power in the moral struggle of existence;
- As a simple petition for daily bread, and as an all-consuming yearning for God Himself;
- As a selfish wish, and as an unselfish solicitude for a brother;
- As wild cursing and vengeful thirst, and as heroic intercession for personal enemies and persecutors;
- As a stormy clamor and demand, and as joyful renunciation and holy serenity;
- As a desire to change God's will and make it chime with our petty wishes, and as a self-forgetting vision of and surrender to the Highest Good;
- As the timid entreaty of the sinner before a stern judge, and as the trustful talk of a child with a kind father;
- As swelling phrases of politeness and flattery before an unapproachable King, and as a free outpouring in the presence of a friend who cares;
- As the humble petition of a servant to a powerful master, and as the ecstatic converse of the bride with the heavenly Bridegroom.