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Spiritual Modalities: Prayer as Rhetoric and Performance

William FitzGerald

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A bold recasting of prayer as a rhetorical art, *Spiritual Modalities* investigates situations, strategies, and performative modes of discourse directed to divine audiences. Examining how prayer "works," *Spiritual Modalities* reads prayer's situations and strategies, its characteristic acts and attitudes, to advance an understanding of prayer as a basic expression of our rhetorical capacities for communication and communion. This groundbreaking analysis demonstrates how prayer draws on fundamental capacities to engage other beings rhetorically to argue that we are never more human than when we address the nonhuman.

Spiritual Modalities is notable in its aim to articulate a critical rhetoric of prayer in a secular idiom. It draws on contributions to rhetorical theory from Kenneth Burke along with a broad range of classical and contemporary perspectives on audience, address, speech acts, and modes of performance. The book also takes a multicultural and multimodal approach to prayer as rhetorical performance. The texts and practices of prayer represented range across religious traditions and historical eras and include both verbal and physical modes of divine address. The book will be of interest to scholars researching religious language, Burkean approaches to discourse, practices of memory, and media studies.

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