



The
Voice of Prayer.

A Poem

BY

Warren Sumner Barlow,

Author

of

“The Voices.”

NEW YORK:

Carleton, Publisher, Madison Square.

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VOICE OF PRAYER.

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AUTHOR OF "THE VOICES."

Though sorrow may fathom the depths of despair,
Sweet hope undiverted, still lingers in prayer.

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The Voice of Prayer.

PRELUDE.

THE aspirations of the soul ascend
On wings of hope, to scenes divinely fair ;
Nor bars nor bolts can hold the silent power
That seeks the elements of light and love ;
Then cherish every longing of the soul,
Let thoughtful prayer dispel all slavish fear,
Let radiant hope extend her full-fledged wings ;
For all our prayers and hopes, but dimly paint
The lofty heights to which we will attain.

THE VOICE OF PRAYER.

TRUE prayer is a boon to the sorrowing soul,
And brings many blessings within its control ;
A ladder that lifts every child of the sod
In closer communion with Nature and God.
It opens within every channel of love,
And brings us in union with angels above.
But God, ever changeless in laws and decrees,
Is ever unbending, regardless of pleas :
Yet prayer aids the soul that aspiringly prays—
Not only resolving but *mending* its ways.

But the zealot declares, "If in *faith* you im-
plore,
All prayers will be answered in bountiful store ;

Though faith may but equal a small mustard-
seed,

It ever will save you, in truth all you need
To move any mountain you wish to set free,
And plant it anew in the depth of the sea."*

But who can *have* faith that ignores every
sense,

That falsifies reason, at judgment's expense?
Can we love at our option whatever we hate?
Think dewdrops and oceans are equally great?
Believe that alike are the day and the night?
And that black birds are mantled in feathers
of white?

That children delight in the sting of a bee,
As much as its honey with biscuit and tea!
O man! *be* a man in the sense of a soul,
Full conscious of faith that you cannot con-
trol!

* Matt. xxi. 21

“Will faith,” said a doubter, while passing a
lake,

“Make *my* axe to swim like a *dry chestnut*
stake?”

If so, then be jabbers, I’m *full* of faith once,”
And out on the lake threw his axe, like a
dunce.

Then perceiving his folly, and seeming to think,
“Indade” (quoth young Patrick) “I *knew* it
would sink”!

- We feel that the son of fair Erin confessed,
What often is held in a patriarch’s breast.

Our faith like our prayers must have reason and
sense,

Or man shows his folly in every pretense.

Ever pray *with the larc*, so shall harmony reign,
And your prayers will not mock you, as utterly
vain.

Then pray that the shadows may fall from your
eyes,
That truth may but triumph, while prejudice
dies,
That all may embrace what their highest
thoughts crave,
Each think for himself, not be led like a slave;
That reason and conscience may ever prevail,
Though cherished opinions forever may fail;
Then fervently pray in the light of God's
laws,
That prayers may be heard, as *effects* follow
cause.

But to pray that the Lord will in mercy come
down,
To feed some poor beggar that comes to your
town,
Is asking your Maker in kindness to do
Precisely the work He has given to you.

How vain are the prayers that the starving be
fed,

Compared to bestowing a morsel of bread.

To pray that kind showers may in bounty de-
scend,

That earthquakes and hurricanes ne'er may of-
fend—

That fire may not burn you, and water not
drown—

To jump from a steeple and gently come
down,—

Is asking Jehovah to alter His law,

As much as to say you've detected a flaw!

To pray that the innocent suffer for crime,

That we in our folly committed through time,

Is to censure the passage that all should revere,

Which saith, that "the guilty can *never* go
clear:"*

* Ex. xxxiv. 7.

No repentance, no *faith* can e'er banish a woe,
For the truth is revealed, "*all must reap what
they sow.*" *

No *forgiveness* can ever change tares into
wheat,

He who sows, must *uproot* them, and learn by
defeat;

Then blend all your prayers with this *true* reve-
lation,

That "each for *himself must* work out his salva-
tion"! †

Man prays that his **Maker** would lengthen his
days,

While the laws of his being he seldom obeys;

The spirit immortal will gladly depart

When life-giving fountains congeal at the heart;

No law is suspended should earth everywhere

Unite in one chorus, to swell the same prayer!

* Gal. vi. 7.

† Phil. ii. 12.

An honest old negro most ardent in prayer,
With reason and faith not developed with
care,

In asking God's blessing on each frugal meal,
For what he most needed made earnest ap-
peal.

A wag who perceived his potatoes were gone,
With basket brim full, at the earliest dawn,
Secreted himself in the cabin o'er head,
Where the negro below him yet slumbered in
bed;

Who soon roused to cooking the best he was
able,

And under the hatchway spread out his pine ta-
ble.

Without a potatoe to grace any plate,
He seated himself, yet bewailing his fate,
Exclaimed, "O my Fader, in merciful love,
Give Cuffy some 'taters from bounties above."
At once the potatoes came showering down,
Upsetting his dishes, and pelting his crown!

“O them’s um, them’s um, bless de Lord, O
my soul!

Who cares for de coffee, de pitcher and bowl?
De shower of big ’taters, O Lord, am sub-
lime,—

But I pray dat you leff um down easy next
time.”

Whether fiction or fact, this illustrates, I
deem,

That *some* answers to prayer are not *all* that
they seem.

Then pray that your prayers with God’s laws
ever blend

In union with *deeds*, that will bless and ex-
tend;

For these are the prayers that the Lord ever
heeds,

Regardless of color, of birth, or of creeds.

Our homes that protect us from sunshine and
storm,

Are prayerful emotions in tangible form :

Asylums and churches, and schools everywhere,

Are fruits of our labor commingled with prayer.

Admitting their errors, I pity the thought

That chides every movement not perfectly
wrought,

For each hath a mission, and laudable plan,

And rather than censure, improve, if you can :

Fraternal forbearance, and charity should

Excuse many follies, where *motives* are good.

The church all advise us that Christ taught with
care,

Not only the duty, but *manner* of prayer,

Yet his prayers were in private—alone he re-
tired,

Where his thoughts undiverted to heaven as-
pired ;

In the depth of the forest at evening's repose,
When Nature forgets all her turmoil and
woes,

There Christ wends his way, from the scenes
of commotion,

And his altar illumines with the flames of devo-
tion!*

By example and precept he taught evermore,
To enter our closet, and shutting the door
In secret to pray: and that moments thus
spent,

Would surely reward us wherever we went.†
But to pray before men at the corners of
streets,

Or with multitudes thronging the synagogue's
seats,

Is to be like the hypocrites, selfish and vain,
Who thus seek the praises of men to attain.‡

* Mat. xiv. 23, Mark vi. 46, Luke v. 16, also vi. 12.

† Mat. vi. 6.

‡ vi. 5.

Then enter your closet—*your soul's center*
closet,
Alone with your God, with your thoughts deep
within,
There pray that you ever, by earnest endeavor,
May fight the good fight and the victory win.

A word kindly spoken the right time and place,
May lift some dark soul from the depths of
disgrace;
May waken a prayer on the altar of love,
That ends in fruition, with angels above:
We thus build a ladder,—each deed is a
round,—
That reaches to heaven, while touching the
ground;
For in aiding the least is involved the reward—
“Well done! Enter into the joy of thy Lord.”*

* Mat. xxv. 21, 23.

Then pray with your purse, with kind words
and good deeds;

O pray that our churches may think less of
creeds,

That ever the poor may be welcomed within,
Though garments are tattered—souls blotted
with sin—

And that love, pure, unselfish, each heart may
expand,

And peace, with its blessings pervade every
land.

O pray that intemperance wither and die,
That man, disenthralled, set his mark ever
high;

That Nature may never indict us for treason,
That man slake his thirst at the fountain of
reason.

That the sword may succumb to the power of
the pen,

Enlightened humanity echoes—Amen!

O pray for the children that beg by the
way,
So friendless, no kindness to cheer the long
day;
Their minds while yet tender by love are im-
pressed,
Then plant your affections within their young
breast;
Who knows by the surface the treasures be-
low?
Where grateful emotions their forces bestow?
You may haply develop a germ in the soul,
That will from that moment have strength of
control.
Then nurture the children—the dear loving
children,
That smilingly greet us wherever we turn,
Instruct them to triumph, that bearing life's
burden,
Its lessons of patience and power they may
learn.

May woman (God bless her!) have equal position
With man, under law, and in *every* condition.
Her "ballot" so gentle like "snowflakes" de-
scending—

With feminine features through laws interblending,
May round the rough angles of turbulent man,
That she in her genius *may be all she can*.

Her true intuitions, oft valued as naught,
Will reach a conclusion with flash of a thought;
While man with his reason, though massive and
strong,
With pond'rous assumptions comes plodding along!

Remember the Indians with filial affection,
And give them our laws, with their arms of pro-
tection.

O pray for yourself in the depth of your soul—
That passion and appetite never control—
That wisdom may guide every action of life—
That love conquer hatred, and banish all strife.

If a husband, or wife, then nurture with care
Reciprocal love, from the fountain of prayer ;
Your little attentions should daily entwine,
Like tendrils that hold every fast-clinging vine.

Your children should walk in the breath of
your love,
While teaching earth's lessons, direct them
above.

O make your homes happy with cheerful de-
light,
And children like *chickens* will come home at
night ;
And none of your household will willingly
roam,
But ever remember "*There's no place like
home.*"

It was labor with prayer that dotted the seas
With the sails of the mariner filled by the
breeze,

And gave him the compass which points to the
star,
To guide him in safety o'er oceans afar.

The prayer of Columbus 'mid slander and
wrong,
Gave birth to Columbia's beautiful song.
How sadly he prayed, 'till his labors were
blest,
With a home for the world "In the Land of
The West."
Then labor and pray 'till the isles of the sea,
Inscribe on their banner "THE LAND OF THE
FREE"!

We little know by what enduring strife,
Our fathers brought this continent to life;
How long and weary were their early years,
How sad and dreary were their daily fears,

While untaught Nature frowned at every blow,
And like the red man was their stalwart
foe;

How Britain ever claimed the "Lion's share"
Of their unceasing toil and anxious care,
And yet they bore oppression like a sage,
Until endurance kindled into rage,
Then they proclaimed, "henceforth *we will be*
free!"

And sank old Britain's taxes with her tea.
Then came their seven years' war—a seven fold
strand,
That bound their hearts in one heroic band;
One prayer was borne on their united breath,
"O give us Liberty, or give us death!"
At last triumphant they became a Nation,
And States were Stars of one Grand Constella-
tion!

But early in their weary toil,
In felling trees to till the soil,

Their brawny arms though hard and strong,
By toiling early, late and long
Their hearts though brave and ever true,
To build this Western World anew,
Were feeble in their force and skill,
Compared to their *unbending will* ;
Their *needs* were father of this prayer,
That burst upon the willing air :

“Aid, for the toiler in his strife!
Aid, for a Nation’s early life!
Aid, for our wives who spin and weave!
Their toilsome hours we pray relieve!
Aid, that our lands may not repose,
But bloom in beauty like the rose.
Let forests bow their stately pride,
That we may o’er their ashes ride;
Let Towns, and Cities rear their heads,
For those who sleep in *trundle beds* :
Come! any force, whate’er it be,
And we will join our fate with thee.”

Their prayers were heard o'er hill and
plain,

Nor did they supplicate in vain:
For laughing streams, whose voices rang,
As down the cliffs they danced and sang,
Were checked amid their mirthful reel,
And made to turn a water-wheel!

Then steam that hissed with foaming pride,
Defying all the powers beside,
Was caught within an iron cage,
While boiling o'er with heated rage!
His force excited naught could hold,
And though his will was scarce controlled,
It was observed, if not abused,
His forces could be wisely used.
Then spindles hummed at his behest—
O'er ocean towered his cloudy crest.
The iron horse the wind outran,
And made the world anew for man!

The lightning from the clouds was caught—
And vitalized with living thought;
Our Franklin reined the flaming steed,
While Morse subdued him to our need,
Whose heart propels electric fires,
Around the world on slender wires!

With magic life new scenes unfurled
Their wonders to a new-born world!
Our iron ribs across our breast,
Bore loaded wheels at our behest;
The reins of thought were in our hands,
While we conversed with distant lands;
Our fertile fields from shore to shore,
Fed other Nations from our store;
While every tongue, and tribe of earth,
Was welcomed at our Nation's hearth:
We grew in numbers, wealth and pow-
er,
And lived an age in every hour!

But pride the bane of worldly strength,
Grew with our growth until, at length,
A viper coiled around our heart,
And chilled our blood by fiendish art.
Thus stupefied we ceased to pray,
While his cold coils extended lay.
Until a mother's burdened prayer,
Electrified the midnight air:
With frenzied lamentations wild,
She prayed, "O give me back my child!
O God, return my darling boy,
And fill a mother's soul with joy!"

Her prayer was echoed far and wide,
It caught the breeze and kissed the tide;
Responses met her earnest plea
For Justice, Truth, and Liberty.
Yet all the powers of hell were hurled,
To choke the prayers that shook the
world!

But Justice held her even scales,
In which the right at length prevails;
And though the blood of thousands slain
With iron hail, was shed like rain;
Though conflict raged most fierce and strong,
Though days were dark and years-so-long,
Yet Freedom's glorious banner rose
Triumphant, over all our foes!

O hills, and dales, and laughing streams,
Kissed by the Sun's enamored beams,
Send your glad shout from sea to sea—
“One Land on God's green Earth is free”!

Free? Think, Oh man, in this glad hour
Doth *Woman* share thy freedom's dower?
Remember—God bestows His care
Of sex regardless everywhere—
All are the equal children—all,
Of Him who notes the “sparrow's fall.”

Must she who is thy counterpart—
The sunny side of every heart—
The part essential to the whole,
Not have a voice in self-control?

Must woman in her high behest,
Obey alone what man thinks best,
And bow to his supreme control,
A thoughtless, helpless, prayerless soul?
Be taxed like man, like man obey,
Moulded by him like potter's clay?

Must he who wins a loving heart,
By his illusive, fiendish art,
Be not disgraced, though undisguised,
While *she* is ruined, and despised?

Must she who rears her noble sons—
Her daughters fair, from little ones,
Have naught to say what laws shall bless
A mother's love, and tenderness?

Shall legal murder scourge the land,
Whose poison dens at every hand
Are portals to a drunkard's grave,
And *woman have no power to save?*
O man invoke her loving aid,
That all these evils may be stayed.

The prayers of our fathers were more than
they seemed,
When the sunshine of Liberty over them
beamed,
For when they proclaimed equal rights through-
out earth!
Our Goddess conceived, and ere long will
give birth,
For her pain and her labor foreshadow the morn,
When Freedom the child of her love will be
born.
Then laws will protect every child of the sod,
And know no distinction, like Nature and God.

Then man will in peace and in purity grow,
Without the intrusion of, Why do ye so?
Our honest convictions like sunbeams will
greet,
And many-toned colors will blend as they
meet;
Then all will be judged by the standard of
worth,
Regardless of wealth or distinction of birth.
Our churches wide open, divested of creeds,
Will mould their instruction to man's highest
needs:
Their lessons of wisdom will teach self-control—
A health-giving fountain to body and soul.
The gospel of love will with laws interblend,
In union with deeds, for a glorious end:
With one common brotherhood under the sun,
All union of interests center in one.
Our natures expanded by freedom of thought,
Though all become teachers, all seek to be
taught;

Yet thought in its channel, like rivers will
flow
To the Ocean of Truth, as still onward we
go ;
Till the Banner of Peace and Good Will is
unfurled,
To all Oceans and Lands that encircle the
World!
That all these rich blessings may bloom every-
where,
Let Nations unite in *effectual* Prayer.

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[See next page.]

Testimonials.

*From the many critical notices and reviews of "THE VOICES,"
we have only room for a few brief extracts.*

Judge BAKER of New York, in his elaborate review of "THE VOICES," says: "Considered in the light of a controversial or didactic poem, it is without an equal in contemporaneous literature—the birth of an audacious mind, and is destined to excite greater and more wide encircling waves of sectarian agitation than any anti-creedal work ever published."

Prof. S. B. BRITAN, in his able review of the work, says: "In the Voice of Nature the author gives us a clearer insight into his own views of the material world, of human nature and God. He has a rational philosophy of the relations of mind and matter, and his theology is at once natural and charitable. He recognizes one God everywhere, present alike in the physical world and in His moral universe. The God he adores, and his strong faith in the goodness that rules the world, are clearly revealed and forcibly expressed in the following paraphrastic and poetical rendering of a beautiful passage in the Sermon on the Mount:

Will He who hears the ravens when they cry,
Mock and deride thee when no hope is nigh?
Will He who clothes the lilies of the field,
That neither toil, nor spin, nor raiment yield;
Who feeds the fowls that never reap nor sow—
Extends His watchful care where'er they go;
Will He who clothes the grass which is to-day,
While all its beauty quickly fades away,
Forget His image—His immortal child!
Is he alone derided and defiled?
Or left to tread the downward thoroughfare,
With Satan to bewilder and ensnare,
And urge him on to death and dark despair?
'O, ye of little faith!' *let reason sway:*
Are not your souls more precious far than they?

WILLIAM H. BURLEIGH, a well-known author and poet, in one of his contributions to the *Chicago Evening Post*, thus speaks of the author and "THE VOICES:" "That he is a bold, earnest man, with very pronounced opinions, that he has a combative and incisive way of stating those opinions, and that, below all seeming antagonism to the letter of old creeds, he accepts the spirit of the new dispensation, his book furnishes abundant evidence. His verse is generally characterized by vigor, and at times glides with a true rhythmic flow, and rings with a genuine poetic harmony."