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Dear lord and father of mankind lyrics meaning

The hymn "Dear Lord and Father of mankind" is one of the UK's most popular hymns. It is usually (in the UK at least) sung to a brilliant tune (REPTON) and its poetic lyrics capture many people's imagination. It is a well loved traditional hymn and an established part of our repertoire. But there is one small question I've always wrestled with: what do the words actually mean? It's more than a little puzzling! Is it truthful and helpful for congregations to sing? One of the interesting things about the hymn is its history. The stanzas of the hymn are taken from a poem by an American Quaker, John Greenleaf Whittier: Entitled The Brewing of Soma, the poem dealt with various kinds of intoxication - by alcohol, drugs or fanaticism. Soma (a word later used by Aldous Huxley for the feel-good drug in Brave New World) was a sacred drink mentioned in ancient Sanskritic books of Indian religion. Whittier's poem is prefaced by a quotation from Max Müller, the first professor of philology at Oxford, who had misty racial theories based on these immemorial rites.Eleven of Whittier's stanzas preceded the six retained for the hymn. They range over the Vedic hallucinogens, the dance of the Islamic Dervish and the trance of the medieval Christian flagellant. (You can read the full poem online here – it's not very long). It seems that the poem itself is in the context of people inducing ecstatic religious experience by drugs or dancing and so on. In contrast, Whittier – a Quaker - believed that God was to be found in the stillness and quiet. This is fairly common Quaker belief, from the few Quakers I've actually talked to! The message seems to be – stop trying to find God in these strange ways, just be still and let God speak to you. When you see it in that light, the lyrics are understandable. The whole thing is shot through with references to stillness or quiet: "without a word", "the silence of eternity", "deep hush", "tender whisper", "noiseless", etc. It's all about being still and letting God speak in the silence. The problem is, I'm not sure this is really a very Christian idea. The song mentions Jesus once, where apparently he shared "the silence of eternity" with the Father. Jesus certainly withdrew to pray, although there's no indication that he withdrew simply to enjoy 'silence' with God! The poem also has the line "speak through the earthquake, wind and fire" – a reference to 1 Kings 19, where God was in the small whisper rather than in the more dramatic events. But – God still spoke. You know, words. The more I think about this hymn the more I dislike it: I disagree with the main idea – that in order to hear God speak you just need to be still. Yes, we don't need frenzied dancing or drugs to communicate with God. But that doesn't mean we can dispense with words altogether. (This is the same issue I have with contemplative prayer, although that's a story for another time). Sadly, I think – like Love Divine - this hymn should relegated to the history books. This is part of my 'hymnology' blog series. Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways; Reclote us in our rightful mind. In purer lives Thy service find, In deeper reverence, praise. In simple trust like theirs who heard, Beside the Syrian sea, The gracious calling of the Lord, Let us, like them, without a word, Rise up and follow Thee. O Sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above, Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee The silence of eternity Interpreted by love! With that deep hush subduing all Our words and works that drown The tender whisper of Thy call, As noiseless let Thy blessing fall As fell Thy manna down. Drop Thy still dews of quietness, Till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress, And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of Thy peace. Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm. Poem Dear Lord and Father of Mankindby John Greenleaf WhittierJohn Greenleaf WhittierGenreHymnWritten1872Meter9.6.8.6Melody"Rest" by Frederick Charles Maker, "Repton" by Hubert Parry "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" is a hymn with words taken from a longer poem, "The Brewing of Soma" by American Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. The adaptation was made by Garrett Horder in his 1884 Congregational Hymns.[1] In the United Kingdom, the hymn is usually sung to the tune "Repton" by Hubert Parry. In the US, the prevalent tune is "Rest" by Frederick Charles Maker. Text The text set appears below. Some hymnal editors omit the fourth stanza or resequence the stanza so that the fifth stanza as printed here comes last. If sung to Parry's tune, "Repton", the last line of each stanza is repeated. It's often customary, when singing the final stanza as printed here, to gradually sing louder from "Let sense be dumb...", reaching a crescendo on "...the earthquake, wind and fire", before then singing the last line "O still, small voice of calm" much more softly. Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways! Reclote us in our rightful mind. In deeper reverence, praise. In simple trust like theirs who heard Beside the Syrian sea The gracious calling of the Lord, Let us, like them, without a word Rise up and follow Thee. O Sabbath rest by Galilee! O calm of hills above, Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee The silence of eternity Interpreted by love! With that deep hush subduing all Our words and works that drown The tender whisper of Thy call, As noiseless let Thy blessing fall As fell Thy manna down. Drop Thy still dews of quietness, Till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress, And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of Thy peace. Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm. The Brewing of Soma Wikisource has original text related to this article: The Brewing of Soma "The Brewing of Soma" is the Whittier poem (1872) from which the hymn is taken. Soma was a sacred ritual drink in Vedic religion, going back to Proto-Indo-Iranian times (ca. 2000 BC), possibly with hallucinogenic properties. The storyline is of Vedic priests brewing and drinking Soma in an attempt to experience divinity. It describes the whole population getting drunk on Soma. It compares this to some Christians' use of "music, incense, vigils drear, and trance, to bring the skies more near, or lift men up to heaven!" But all in vain - it is mere intoxication. Whittier ends by describing the true method for contact with the divine, as practised by Quakers: Sober lives dedicated to doing God's will, seeking silence and selflessness in order to hear the 'still, small voice', described in 1 Kings 19:11-13 as the authentic voice of God, rather than earthquake, wind or fire. The poem opens with a quote from the Rigveda, attributed to Vasishta: These libations mixed with milk have been prepared for Indra: offer Soma to the drinker of Soma. (Rv. vii. 32, trans. Max Müller).[2] Associated tunes Hubert Parry Hubert Parry originally wrote the music for what became Repton in 1888 for the contralto aria 'Long since in Egypt's plenteous land' in his oratorio Judith. In 1924 George Gilbert Stocks, director of music at Repton School, set it to 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' in a supplement of tunes for use in the school chapel. Despite the name to repeat the last line of words, Repton provides an inspired matching of lyrics and tune. By this time, Rest, by Frederick Maker (matching the metrical pattern without repetition), was already well established with the lyrics in the United States. Tunes it can be sung to are Repton by Hubert Parry Rest by Frederick Charles Maker Hammersmith by William Henry Gladstone Elegy for Dunkirk by Dario Marianelli Serenity (song by Charles Ives) The American composer Charles Ives took stanzas 14 and 16 of The Brewing of Soma ("O Sabbath rest.../Drop Thy still dews...") and set them to music as the song "Serenity"; however, Ives quite likely extracted his two stanzas from the hymn rather than from the original poem. Published in his collection: "114 songs", in 1919, the first documented performance of the Ives version was by mezzo-soprano Mary Bell, accompanied by pianist Julius Hijman.[3] Uses In 2005 the hymn was voted second in BBC One's show Songs of Praise poll to find the United Kingdom's favourite hymn.[4] It was used in the Broadway production of the musical Jekyll & Hyde, at the wedding scene. It can be heard being sung by the Rede College Choir in the 2007 film Atonement during the Dunkirk evacuation.[5] The pipes and drums of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards covered the hymn for their 2007 album, Spirit of the Glen: Journey. It is quoted by the character Josh (Matt Keeslar) in the 1998 film The Last Days of Disco. On June 12, 2016, the poem (set to the hymn tune Repton) was sung at the Cathedral Sings in the Washington National Cathedral, which was dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Reilly Lewis, the longtime conductor of the Cathedral Choral Society and founder of the Washington Bach Consort, following his sudden passing on June 9, 2016. It was sung and performed by the Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps in their 2016 show Propaganda to the tune of the Elegy for Dunkirk. In a slightly modified lyrics version titled "Dear Ford and Father of Mankind", it was sung and performed in Lincoln Cathedral in The Grand Tour's Funeral for a Ford (series 3, episode 14). Notes ^ Ian C. Bradley, Abide with me: the world of Victorian hymns (1997), p. 171; Google Books. ^ Müller, Max (1859). A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature. London: Williams and Norgate. pp. 543-4. Retrieved 4 November 2013. ^ "A Descriptive Catalogue of The Music of Charles Ives". 25 May 1950. hdl:10079/fa/music.mss.0014.1. Cite journal requires |journal= (help) ^ BBC Songs of Praise poll, released 27 October 2005 (accessed 18 May 2009). ^ Internet Movie Database External links Words related to Dear Lord and Father of Mankind at Wikisource Retrieved from " Bible Study by David Wright John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), an American Quaker, was a farmer's son, living in New England. At first he worked on his father's farm - hence, perhaps, his feeling for beauty and peace. Later he became a poet and a newspaper editor, writing not only poems but also anti-slavery propaganda. He did not write hymns: the poems have subsequently been adapted for use as hymns. Among the other well-known hymns which have been abstracted from his poems are 'Immortal love, for ever full' and 'O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother'. 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' is a hymn which must have the most unusual origin of all. Very few people know that it is part of a poem entitled, 'The brewing of Soma'. Soma is an intoxicating drug that was used by Indians. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote of 'pseudo-experience', of shallow, 'frothy' Christianity, comparing them with the superficial, transient joy of drug-taking. The verses of the poem that have become this well-known hymn contrast real faith with such, 'foolish ways' (verse 1, line 2). Only through purer lives and deeper reverence (verse 1, lines 4-5) can we come to a real faith - and this can only happen if we ask God to forgive us (verse 1, line 2) and to reclote us in our rightful mind (verse 1, line 3). Simple trust is called for - rising up and following the Lord, like the disciples 'beside the Syrian Sea' (i.e. the Sea of Galilee, verse 2). And silence is needed - the calm of lake and hills (verse 3) - to enable us to hear the 'whisper of thy call' (verse 4, line 3). God does not shout, forcing us to listen, but if we cease to strive (verse 5); if we ask God to take the strain and stress from us, then we can hear the 'still, small voice of calm.' (verse 6). Our ordered lives will then recognise the beauty of peace (verse 5, lines 4-5): not merely peace, but God's peace, that 'passeth all understanding' (Philippians 4:7). The hymn both speaks of Jesus retreating from the crowds to be alone with God and alludes to Elijah's encounter with God in the 'still small voice' after the earthquake, wind and fire (1 Kings 19). This is a hymn, written many years ago by a poet, based on one simple yet profound theme. As stress becomes more and more evident around us and within us, and as both drugs and 'frothy', superficial worship seem to be on the increase, so this hymn becomes more and more meaningful to our experience. © 2002 David and Jill Wright. Copying facilities provided are limited to local use by owners of HymnQuest. Wider or commercial use needs negotiation with the copyright holder. The copyright in this bible study vests in the author. Permission is given for them to be reproduced by HymnQuest purchasers for local use. Wider or commercial use requires their consent. "DEAR LORD AND FATHER OF MANKIND" "And the peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7) INTRO: A song which poetically describes the peace of God that we can have is "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" (#61 in Hymns for Worship Revised). The text was written by John Greenleaf Whittier, who was born on Dec. 17, 1807, at East Haverhill in the Merrimac Valley area of rural Massachusetts. The son of poor Quaker parents, he worked on his family's farm until he was twenty, with his early education through the middle grades at the local village school where his teacher fired his interest in poetry at age fourteen by lending him a copy of poems by Robert Burns. After his sister sent a poem of his to the weekly Free Press at Newburyport, he attracted the attention of the publisher, William Lloyd Garrison, who convinced his father to send him to Haverhill Academy for two years, although young William had to work as a shoemaker to pay the bill. With this education, he followed a career in journalism beginning in 1829 and worked in cities such as Boston, MA, Hartford, CN, and Washington, DC. Following the publication of his first book, Legends of New England, in 1831, he became editor in 1836 of the Pennsylvania Freeman, an anti-slavery newspaper of Philadelphia, PA, where he was hunted by a mob and stoned, and as an ardent abolitionist, employed his pen against slavery. However, his father's death recalled Whittier to the farm in 1839. After his own health declined due to overwork, he moved to Amesbury, MA, where he was elected to the state legislature, but gave up a promising political career to rejoin the abolitionist movement and from 1847 to 1860 served as corresponding editor for another paper, the National Era of Washington. However, he is mostly remembered as a poet who ranks among the best in American literature. The publication of his Snow Bound in 1866 gave him national recognition and financial security. "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" is taken from the final portion of his seventeen stanza poem, "The Brewing of Soma," which was first published in The Atlantic Magazine of Apr., 1872, after Whittier had done some reading about the Hindu religion. The first eleven stanzas, beginning "The*****s blazes, the cauldron's smoke," tell of a ritual practice by a religious sect in India in which an intoxicating drink was brewed and then compare this pagan rite with the practices of modern men. The last six stanzas, which express the poet's concept of true worship, were first extracted and adapted as a hymn for the 1884 London, England, hymnbook Worship Song by editor W. Garrett Horder. Most of our books have used stanzas 12, 13, 14, and 16, while many other hymnals also have #17; #15 is almost universally omitted today. The tune (Elton, Rest, Penzance, All Saints, Magdalen, or Whittier) was composed for this text by Frederick Charles Maker (1844-1927). It was first included in C. S. Barrett's collection, The Congregational Church Hymnary, published in London in 1887. Another famous melody by Maker is used with Elizabeth Clephane's "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." Whittier himself said that he was not a hymn writer because he knew nothing about music. He wrote, "Only a very few of my pieces were written for singing. A good hymn is the best use to which poetry can be devoted, but I do not claim to have succeeded in composing one." However, the fact that hymnbook editors have used portions of his poems to make some 75 hymns, several of which have been quite popular, demonstrates that many people would disagree with him. Some of these hymns include "Immortal Love, Forever Full," "We May Not Climb the Heavenly Steeps," and "O Brother Man." His last book of poems, At Sundown, was published in 1890, and he died at age 86 while visiting friends at Hampton Fall, NH, on Sept. 7, 1893. Among hymnbooks published by members of the Lord's church during the twentieth century for use in churches of Christ, the hymn appeared in the 1922 edition of the 1921 Great Songs of the Church (No. 1) and the 1937 Great Songs of the Church No. 2 both edited by E. L. Jorgenson; the 1948 Christian Hymns No. 2 and the 1966 Christian Hymns No. 3 both edited by L. O. Sanderson; the 1963 Christian Hymnal edited by J. Nelson Slater; and the 1963 Abiding Hymns edited by Robert C. Welch. Today it may be found in the 1971 Songs of the Church, the 1990 Songs of the Church 21st C. Ed., and the 1994 Songs of Faith and Praise all edited by Alton H. Howard; the 1977 Special Sacred Selections edited by Ellis J. Crum; the 1978/1983 (Church) Gospel Songs and Hymns edited by V. E. Howard; the 1986 Great Songs Revised edited by Forrest M. McCann; and the 1992 Praise for the Lord edited by John P. Wiegand; as well as Hymns for Worship; and the 2007 Sacred Songs of the Church edited by William D. Jeffcoat. "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," one of Whittier's best-known hymns, mentions several things necessary for peace with God. I. From stanza 1 we find that we must ask God to forgive us "Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways; Reclote us in our rightful mind. In purer lives Thy service find, In deeper reverence, praise." A. Jesus taught that we should seek God's forgiveness: Matt. 6.12 B. The language is taken from the story of the naked Gadarene demoniac who, after his encounter with Jesus, was clothed and in his right mind: Mk. 5.1-15 C. Just as the demon was cast out of him, so when our sins are taken away we can give purer lives in service and praise to Christ: Heb. 12.28, 13.15 II. From stanza 2 we find that we must trust the Lord "In simple trust like theirs who heard, Beside the Syrian sea, The gracious calling of the Lord, Let us, like them, without a word Rise up and follow Thee." A. Trust in the Lord is important: Prov. 3.5 B. We need to have the same kind of trust as those first disciples who heard and responded to Jesus' invitation had: Mk. 1.17-18 C. And our trust will be demonstrated by following Jesus in everything He tells us: Matt. 16.24 III. From stanza 3 we find that we must learn the importance of prayer "O Sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above, Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee The silence of eternity. Interpreted by love!" A. The only way that we can find rest for our souls is by coming to Jesus: Matt. 11.28-30 B. And Jesus example of quiet retreat for prayer shows us that by sharing such silence with God we can have a recovery of values from the viewpoint of eternity: Lk. 6.12 C. Thus, by going to God in prayer often, we can be better impressed with the immensity of His great love for us: Jn. 3.16 IV. From the universally omitted stanza 4 we find that we must depend on God for sustenance "With that deep hush subduing all Our words and works that drown The tender whisper of Thy call, As noiseless let Thy blessing fall As fell Thy manna down." A. We must be careful that we do not become so involved in our own words and works in trying to provide physical sustenance that we fail to trust in God and seek His spiritual sustenance: Matt. 6.25-34, Jn. 6.27 B. The tender whisper of God's call comes through the gospel: 2 Thess. 2.13 C. Therefore, we should listen to Him and recognize that we rely on Him for all our needs just as the Israelites relied on God for the manna: Exo. 16.1-21, Jn. 6.31-35 V. From stanza 5 we find that we must love God for peace "Drop Thy still dews of quietness, Till all our striving cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress of life: 1 Pet. 5.7 C. And with this kind of attitude, we can truly know the beauty of His peace: Col. 3.15 VI. From stanza 6 we find that we must let God speak to us "Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still small voice of calm." A. The idea of letting sense be dumb and flesh retire refers to the fact that we must not depend on human wisdom in our relationship with God: 1 Cor. 2.1-5 B. One of the reasons why this stanza is not included in our books may be that some might object to it thinking that it advocates some kind of direct communication with God. But realizing its figurative nature, we can understand it simply as using language taken from Elijah's experience on Mt. Horeb to remind us that we need to quit depending on ourselves and stop to listen to what God says: 1 Ki. 10.9-13 C. "Through the earthquake, wind, and fire," does not mean that God will speak to us "by means of" these things, but that we need to listen for His voice "over and above" all the noises that surround us. Of course, we recognize that God does not speak to us today by a literal "still small voice of calm" but through the scriptures: 2 Tim. 3.16-17 CONCL.: Whittier is often called "America's beloved Quaker poet." In this hymn, he expresses the conviction that the way to God is not through mere formalistic religious rites nor frenzied sacred madness, but through simplicity and sincerity of heart. May we too remember this as we seek to worship and serve the "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind."

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