

410-636

A Prayer for Peace  
SATB, organ, opt. cong.

Carlton R. Young

# A Prayer for Peace

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This text was included under the title “For Universal Peace” at page 4, no. 2, in *Hymns of Intercession for All Mankind*, 1758. John Wesley included it in *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, 1780, at no. 430, in the section “For Believers Interceding for the World” and was retained in the Collection with *Supplement*, 1831. The hymn first appeared in United States Methodist hymnals at no. 142, in *A Collection of Hymns for The Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1821, was retained in reprints of that hymnal until at least 1835, but did not again appear in official hymnals until its inclusion at no. 449, in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989. The hymn, composed in the decades of war and rumors of war, may reflect public accounts of fierce battles, for example, of the killing field of Culloden that took place in April, 1745. The second stanza includes Satanic images from the depths of Sheol, drawn from Revelation 9:11: “They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit,” his name in Hebrew is Abaddon [Destruction], and in Greek he is called Apollyon [Destroyer].

Victor R. Gold and William L. Holladay comment that the images also express the violent death and destruction of the defilers of God in Jeremiah 7:30-34. The most gruesome of Israel’s aberrations was the sacrifice of children (19:5; 32:35) on the burning platform (Topheth, 2 Kings 23:10), an illicit place of worship in the Valley of Hinnom where children were sacrificed as burnt offerings to the god Baal. Strictly forbidden by God (Lev. 18:21), it will eventually be recognized as murder (Metzger and Murphy, 1991, p. 974). The poet’s vast repertory of scriptural metaphor and detail is demonstrated in his reference to Topheth, the sacred place that Jeremiah states will become the burying ground, i.e., the “valley of Slaughter.”

The descending/ascending triads, and the canon depict war as a reoccurring event, generation after generation. The second stanza treble voices reflect the vulnerability of women and children who bear the most burden in any war. The congregational stanza reminds us we all participate in war, whose chief aim is to kill and destroy, conversely we can pray/choose not to kill and destroy, “take the murderer from our hearts.” Stanza four is a call for the nations in unity to establish the kingdom of peace and perfect love. –C.Y.

# A Prayer for Peace

SATB, organ

Charles Wesley, 1758\*

Carlton R. Young

□=ca. 72  
*Sostenuto*  
*mp*

Repeat these three measures as stanza 3 is read. When reading is finished, complete the three measures and continue to stanza 4.

S.A.  
T.B.

*mp*

st. 2., S.A.

1. Our earth we now la - ment to see with  
2. As list - en on A - bad - don s side, they  
4. Who now a - gainst each oth - er rise, the

*mp*

1. Our earth we now la -  
4. Who now a - gainst each

tacet st. 2

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4

7

floods of wick - ed - ness o er - flowed, with  
man - gle their own flesh, and slay; To -  
na - tions of the earth con - strain to

ment to see with floods of wick - ed - ness o er - flowed,  
oth - er rise, the na - tions of the earth con - strain

10

vio - lence, wrong, and cru - el - ty, one wide ex - tend - ed  
phet is moved, and o pens wide its mouth for its e -  
fol - low af - ter peace, and prize the bless - ings of thy

with vio - lence, wrong, and cru - el - ty, one  
to fol - low af - ter peace, and prize the

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13 Last time to Coda 5

field of blood, nor-mous prey; right-eous reign, where men like fiends each and myr-iads sink be- wide ex-tend-ed field of blood, bless-ings of your where

16

oth-er tear neath the grave, i all the hell-ish and plunge in-to the men like fiends each oth-er tear in

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6

19

rage of war.  
flam - - ing wave.

all the hell - ish rage of war.

Stanza 3: Read very slowly as organ plays measures 1–3, See instructions on page 3.

- Choir: O might the universal Friend  
the havoc of his creatures see!
- All: O might the universal Friend  
The havoc of his creatures see!
- Choir: Bid our unnatural discord end,  
declare us reconciled in thee!
- All: Bid our unnatural discord end  
declare us reconciled in thee!
- Choir: Write kindness on our inward parts  
and chase the murderer from our hearts!
- All: Write kindness on our inward parts  
and chase the murderer from our hearts!

22

*Coda*

the joys of u - ni - ty to prove, the

right - eous reign, the joys of u - ni - ty to prove, the

*Coda*

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26 7

par - a - dise of per - fect love, per - fect

par - a - dise of per - fect love, per - fect love,

30

love!

per - fect love!

*rit.* *fff*

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8

Our earth we now lament to see  
with floods of wickedness overflowed,  
with violence, wrong, and cruelty,  
one wide extended field of blood,  
where men like fiends each other tear,  
in all the hellish rage of war.

As listed on Abaddon's side,  
they mangle their own flesh, and slay:  
Tophet is moved, and opens wide  
its mouth for its enormous prey;  
and myriads sink beneath the grave,  
and plunge into the flaming wave.

O might the universal Friend  
the havoc of his creatures see!  
Bid our unnatural discord end;  
declare us reconciled in thee!  
Write kindness on our inward parts,  
and chase the murderer from our hearts!

Who now against each other rise,  
the nations of the earth, constrain  
to follow after peace, and prize  
the blessings of thy righteous reign,  
the joys of unity to prove,  
the paradise of perfect love!

—Charles Wesley, 1758.

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