

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://www.wicketgate.co.uk) you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002.

# ***The Church – The Body and its Members. A Precious Consideration.***

Dear Friends,

Of the many descriptions of the Church of Christ in the New Testament, there is none more precious than that which presents the Church as a "body". Not only is the description of the Church as a body a precious one, but it is also a very helpful one when it comes to any individual and local Church of Christ endeavouring to be what the Lord has called it to be. This is mainly due to the fact that under the figure of a body we are enabled to see, not only that a Church of Christ is called to a position of unity and oneness under God, but we are also enabled to see the *kind* of unity and oneness that a Church is called to.

The unity of the Church is the unity of a body. And whereas the Church is "one", it is one in the sense of being *one composed of many*. The unity of a Church is a "unity in diversity". One body; many parts – with all the parts being "members in particular", and "members one of another" within the body, functioning in their own place and in their own way to the good of the whole. It is a precious concept, and it is a very helpful concept, indeed, when it comes to our own local church situations and workings.

For one thing, it is meant to keep *all* the members from *despising any* of the member's place or functions within the body. The apostle Paul has some very straightforward things to say along that very line in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1Cor 12:21). "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee:" And then to drive that lesson home even more forcibly, he says, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour ..."

Can any one part of the body say to another, "I have no need of thee"? Indeed, no, says the Lord's apostle. And although some part of the body might appear more feeble, or less honourable, than some other parts, that member is most necessary and requires the attention of the whole just like the rest.

The apostle's words are worthy of our deepest concentration when it comes to the functioning of the Church of Christ that we are part of. Something that the devil will always endeavour to rob the Church of is her own identity and dignity – both with regards to her totality and her parts.

There is reputedly a famous painting somewhere in Venice that is reckoned one of the world's masterpieces. One of the things that especially marks out the painting as a masterpiece is the exactness of the shoes that the characters in the painting wear. They are intricate and precise, right down to the last detail of the eye-lets, and so forth. The story behind those shoes runs like this: a local cobbler had been repairing a pair of the artist's shoes and had called with them on the very day that the artist had completed his painting – or so he thought. The cobbler looked at the painting, and at the shoes that the characters were wearing, and very gently said to the artist, "Begging your pardon, sir, but the latches and the eye-lets of your shoes are all wrong". And so, there and then, under the expert guidance and advice of the old shoemaker, the artist reworked and remodelled that whole part of his painting until he eventually produced the masterpiece that is known today.

The artist knew a lot about painting; the shoemaker knew a lot about shoes. Between them, each functioning in his own sphere, they produced a masterpiece for all the world to see.

Philip Dodderidge, who wrote "The Family Expositor", tells us how he went about much of that great enterprise, when it came to some particular portions of scripture. For example, in dealing with those passages relating to "length of days", and "grey heads", etc., Dodderidge used to draw aside with the older members of his

congregation, and he would search their hearts and search their minds concerning those things that he himself, as yet, had never felt nor experience. Dodderidge was nobody's fool, and had an immense stature of intellect; but there were other members within that body of Christ that knew a thing or two as well from another angle.

Indeed, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee." Each member within the body is dignified by being in the body in the first place. And as each member performs in its place in the body no other part of the body may rise up and despise it and say, "I have no need of thee".

For another thing, the concept of the Church as one body and many members, each dignified in its own particular place and function, greatly helps to combat the spirit of any one member wrongly desiring another's place in the body.

In that same chapter 12 of first Corinthians already referred to, there is one mighty statement of the sovereign workings of God that we can in no wise overlook. It is in connection with the numerous workings of the body, and it says this – "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, *as it hath pleased him*". The creator of the body knows where He wishes the members of the body to be, and there He places them, in all His sovereign skill and with all His sovereign purpose.

Now, it is not a fatalistic view of any believer's place or function within the body of the Church of which that believer is a part. Indeed no; "If any man desire the office of a bishop he desireth a good work". But the feasibility of that desire has numerous acid test that can be applied to it to see if that desire prompted by God's Holy Spirit, or merely a human desire, albeit honourable and sincere in itself. The best kind of indication to our souls is not where we best *feel* we should be in the body, but where we best *function* in the body to the glory of Christ.

I don't know if my foot would ever desire to read a book! Being a basically orderly body I don't suppose the question ever arises. But, this

I do know, that if my foot ever did decide to try and read a book, there wouldn't be much reading done! The eye does the reading, the foot does the walking. What is very often patently obvious in the natural body, can be just as obvious in the spiritual body of the Church when Christ, the Head of the Church is guiding His body by His Word.

However we are speaking about "wrong" desire, and the issue of any one member of a body of Christ's people "wrongly" desiring another member's place in the body; and this can be an attitude of heart and mind perhaps more common than we think. How it usually expresses itself in in that plain, old-fashioned "faraway fields are green" mentality.

Sometimes we see someone doing a certain job, or a certain work, within the Church, and we immediately think, "That would be the job for me in the Church. It doesn't seem to take a lot of effort – or, at least, if it does, it seems to have a lot of "reward" attached to it. I wish I had that part of the work to do", and so forth. But, does it not take a lot of effort? Remember, what is normally seen in any job or undertaking is the "end product" not the labour etc., that went into producing it.

It has been said that within the Christian life we bear our own crosses best. That is absolutely true; God matches the cross to the cross-bearer. When we come to see that, we come to a great deal of peace in our souls. It is exactly the same with regards to our place and our calling with in the Church of Christ; God matches the function to the member – "as it hath pleased him". As we look for that which we can best do within the body to the good of the whole, then we will find the joy and the peace of serving the Lord in all things. It is not the function that Christ will take into account at the end, but the faithful discharge of that function whatever it may happen to be.

There is a famous story of a lame man and a blind man who were both called to dine with the king of their country. The blind man couldn't find his way to the palace, and the lame man's legs wouldn't carry him there. After some discussion they hit on the obvious solution:

the blind man would carry the lame man to the palace, and in that way the blind man would have a pair of eyes and the lame man a pair of legs.

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Christ has given "every one of us" a "gift" – a function and a place within His body, the Church; He has also given us "grace" in accordance with that gift and in connection with that gift. God grant us grace to use that grace in order that we might exercise that gift to the glory and the praise of Christ.

**BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE**

***Mrs Seaton's Letter  
To the Boys and Girls***

Dear Boys and Girls,

How often have you heard your mummy or daddy say this – "We can't afford it." Perhaps you have wished for something but have had to say, "I can't afford it." We usually say this with regards to "material" things; but there are lots of areas in our life that it applies to as well. Here is a poem that tells us of some of those things that we can't afford.

"We can't afford to win the gain that means another's loss  
We can't afford to miss the crown by stumbling at the cross.

We can't afford the heedless jest that robs us of a friend;  
We can't afford the laugh that finds in bitter tears an end.

We can't afford the feast today that brings tomorrow's fast;  
We can't afford the race that comes to tragedy at last.

We can't afford to play with fire, or tempt a serpent's bite;  
We can't afford to think that sin brings any true delight.

We can't afford with serious heed to treat the cynic's sneer;  
We can't afford to wise men's words to turn a careless ear.

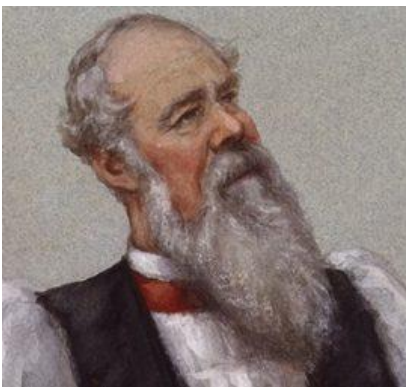
We can't afford for hate to give back hatred in return;  
We can't afford to feed a flame and make it fiercer burn.

We can't afford to lose the soul for this world's fleeting breath.  
We can't afford to barter life in mad exchange for death.

But blind to good are we apart from Thee, all-seeing Lord;  
Oh grant us light that we may Know the things we can't afford!

There is no record of who wrote that poem, boys and girls, but it can remind us of those words that our Lord Jesus spoke – "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

Love, as always,  
Mrs Seaton.



## *Satan's Desire*

*By*  
*J. C. Ryle*

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." (Luke chapter 22 verse 31)

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We learn from these verses, *what a fearful enemy the devil is to believers*. We read that "the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat". He was near Christ's flock, though they saw him not. He was longing to compass their ruin, though they knew it not. The wolf does not crave the blood of the lamb more than the devil desires the destruction of souls.

The personality, activity, and power of the devil are not sufficiently thought of by Christians. This is he who brought sin into the world at the beginning, by tempting Eve. This is he who is described in the Book of Job as "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in in it." This is he whom our Lord calls "the prince of this world", a "murderer" and a "liar". This is he whom Peter compares to a "roaring lion seeking whom he may devour". This is he whom John speaks of as "the accuser of the brethren". This is he who is ever endeavouring to work evil in the Churches of Christ – catching away good seed from the hearts of hearers, sowing tares amidst the wheat, stirring up persecutions, suggesting false doctrines, fomenting divisions. The world is a snare to the believer; the flesh is a burden and a clog; but there is no enemy so dangerous as that restless, invisible, experienced enemy, the devil.

If we believe the Bible, let us not be ashamed to believe that there is a devil. It is an awful proof of the hardness and blindness of unconverted men, that they can jest and speak lightly of Satan.

If we profess to have any real religion, let us be on our guard against the devil's devices. The enemy who overthrew David and Peter, and assaulted Christ Himself, is not an enemy to be despised. He is very subtle; he has studied the heart of man for over six thousand years; he can approach us under the garb of an "Angel of light". We have need to watch and pray, and put on the whole armour of God. It is a blessed promise, that if we resist him he will flee from us. It is a still more blessed thought, that when the Lord comes He will bruise Satan under our feet, and bind him in chains.

We learn, also, from these verses, *one great secret of a believer's perseverance in the faith* – even against the devil. We read that our Lord said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." It was owing to Christ's intercession that Peter did not entirely fall away.

The continued existence of grace in a believer's heart is a great standing miracle. His enemies are so mighty, and his strength is so small, the world is so full of snares and his heart is so weak, that it seems at first



sight impossible for him to reach heaven. The passage of scripture before us explains his safety. He has a mighty Friend at the right hand of God. He, whoever lives to make intercession for him. There is a watchful Advocate, who is daily pleading for him, seeing all his daily necessities, and obtaining daily supplies of mercy and grace for his soul. His grace never altogether dies because Christ always lives to intercede.

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There is a safe and secret place  
Beneath the wings divine;  
Reserved for all the heirs of grace,  
Oh, be that refuge mine!

The least and feeblest there may 'bide  
Uninjured and unawed;  
While thousands fall on every side,  
He rests secure in God.

The angels watch him on his way,  
And aid with friendly arm;  
And Satan, roaring for his prey,  
May hate, but cannot harm.

H. F. Lyte.



## ***Gleanings in the Psalms***

### ***Psalm 94 (concluded)***

**Verse 11.** "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are **vanity.**" What a humbling thought is here suggested to us: - If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of creation – the inanimate and irrational beings – the thought would probably have only accorded with our own views. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of

the lower creation; to man, that distinguished part of creation who unites in his person morality and immortality – heaven and earth. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity." Then, had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed to that which is the peculiar glory of man – the intellectual part: his thoughts. It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures that are round about us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet, in this tender part we are touched. Even the *thoughts* of man are vanity.

The decision given in this passage is the judgment of Him who cannot err; the decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal; "The Lord knoweth."

*Andrew Fuller*

**Verse 12. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."** If we have nothing but the rod, we profit not by the rod; but if we have nothing but the word, we shall never profit by the word. It is the Spirit given with the word, and the Spirit given with the rod, by which we profit under both or either. Chastening and divine teaching go together, else there will be no profit by chastening.

*Joseph Caryl*

**Verse 13. "That thou mayest give him rest ..."** As rowers in a boat turn their backs to the shore, and trust to the man at the helm, so should we proceed in duty through life – turn our backs from our anxious cares for the future, and leave the guidance of them all to God who guides the helm. Do thy part with industry and leave the event with God. I have seen matters fall out so unexpectedly that they have taught me in all affairs neither to despair nor to presume not to despair, for God can help me; not to presume, for God can cross me. I will never despair, because I have a God; I will never presume, because I am but a man.

*Newton*

**Verse 14. "For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance."** He may cast them down, but he can never cast them off:-

"He may chasten and correct,  
But he never can neglect;  
May in faithfulness reprove,  
But he ne'er can cease to love."

*C.H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 19. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."** When a swarm of bees dislodge themselves, they are all in confusion, flying here and there without any order till at last they are hived again. Then the uproar is at an end, and they fall to work peaceably as before. So the Christian will find it with his own heart: God in the promise is the soul's hive; let the Christian dislodge his thoughts from there, and presently they run riot and fly up and down as in a fright, until he can recollect himself and settle his heart again upon the promise. Then he recovers his former peace.

*William Gurnall*

**Verse 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."**

Consider this malignant host:-

- (1) The rebels, or mutineers, "thoughts."
- (2) The number of them, no less than a "multitude."
- (3) The captain whose colours they bear; a disquieted mind, "*my* thoughts"
- (4) The field where the battle is fought; in the heart, "within me."

Consider the other army:-

- (1) There are comforts.
- (2) There are abundant comforts.
- (3) They are "thy comforts.
- (4) They "delight" the soul.

So – in the nature of them, being comforts, there is tranquility; in the

number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being Thy comforts, there is omnipotency; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security.

*From Thomas Adams*

**Verse 23. "And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity ...".**

This is a sober warning: it is an ill work that wicked ones are about. They make fetters for their own feet, and build houses to fall upon their own heads. Sin damns and destroys the parents of it.

*William Greenhill*

## ***A Church Desired***

### **1**

How beautiful that church must be  
Where Watchful is the Porter,  
While Prudence has the oversight,  
And Patience the exhorter.  
Where Harmony conducts the praise,  
And Reverence the worship,  
Where Loyalty ascribes to Christ  
The undisputed Lordship.

### **2**

Humility pervades the place  
And Piety sweet smileth.  
Where Purity her fragrance breathes,  
And Gentleness beguileth.  
Simplicity adorns the walls,  
And Grace all captivating  
Benevolence is prominent  
While Zeal is operating.

### **3**

Here Mercy wears her diadem,  
And Meekness conquers friction,  
While Truth exerts its influence,

Joy adds its benediction.  
Here Righteousness is placed on guard,  
And Faith is ever active;  
While goodness evermore abounds  
And Christ is all attractive.

4

O Lord! Restore Thy Church to this  
Her primitive position  
And let us taste on earth the bliss  
Of this divine condition.

Writer Unknown.

## ***True Life and Pleasure***

The family motto of Philip Doddridge's ancestors was "whilst we live, let us live." Dear old Philip filled that motto with full meaning when he penned these lines alongside the family arms: -

"Live whilst you live," the Epicure would say,  
And seize the pleasures of the present day.

"Live whilst you live, the sacred preacher cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies.

Lord, in my views, let both united be;  
I live in pleasure whilst I live to Thee.