

GRATEFUL DEAD STUDIES

Volume 5

2021/2022

ISSN 2572-7818 (Online)

ISSN 2572-7702 (Print)

Lydgate, John

The Grateful Dead

CITATION INFORMATION

John Lydgate

The Grateful Dead

Grateful Dead Studies

Volume 5 (2021/2022)

Pages: 243–245

URL: https://gratefuldeadstudies.org/GDSv5_Lydgate.pdf

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LAST WORDS

The Grateful Dead

JOHN LYDGATE

Remembyrd by scriptures, we fynde and rede
Holsum and holy it is, to thynke and pray
ffor al the sowles that be past in dede
Out of this wrecchid world, vnto domesday,
Abidyng in purgatory with sorvful lay,
Cryeng and calling for mercy and pite,
Vnto them in special that there friendis be.

There was a man, right hooly and devoute,
of parise in fraunce, that worthy cyte,
That daily wold sey, in his chicrche-yerde aboute,
ffor all christen sowlis, with mercy and pite,
De profundis, paternoster, and Ave.
This prayer he vsed continuauly,
Til god *purveyed* for hym continuauly.

It fil on a tyme, he was *pursued*
Of his mortal enemyes with grete violence.

He fledde for the best, and ther malice eschewed,
 And toke the chircheyerde for his defence,
 And sayde *Deprofundis* with entier diligence.
 The bodyes arose out of theyr graves ;
 Somme appered with gleyves, and some with staves.

So grete a multitude assemblid to fight,
 His enemyes gan fle, and sore were agast.
 He thankyd god of his grete myght,
 And seyde *deprofundis* when they were past.
 His reward in heuen he had at last.
 Therfor it is holsom for to have in memory
 The soulis that ly In paynes of purgatory.

TRANSLITERATION

This line-by-line transliteration is provided for reference; it is not a precise scholarly transliteration. For Arthur Beatty's 1902 condensation, see "A Note on Lydgate's 'The Grateful Dead'," which follows.

Remembered by scriptures, we find and read
 Wholesome and holy it is, to think and pray
 for all the souls that be past in dead
 Out of this wretched world, unto doomsday,
 Abiding in purgatory with sorrowful lay,
 Crying and calling for mercy and pity,
 Unto them in special that there friends be.

There was a man, right holy and devout,
 of Paris in France, that worthy city,
 That daily would say, in his church yard about,
 for all Christian souls, with mercy and pity,
 De profundis, paternoster, and Ave.
 This prayer he used continually,

Till God purveyed for him continually.

It fell on a time, he was pursued
By his mortal enemies with great violence.
He fled for the best, and their malice eschewed,
And took the churchyard for his defense,
And said Deprofundis with total diligence.
The bodies arose out of their graves;
Some appeared with spears, and some with staves.

So great a multitude assembled to fight,
His enemies fled, and sore were aghast.
He thanked god of his great might,
And said deprofundis when they were past.
His reward in heaven he had at last.
Therefore it is wholesome for to have in memory
The souls that lie in pains of purgatory.

NOTES

L 21: *Gleyves*: plural of *glaive*, n.: a weapon with a long shaft ending in a point or an attached blade; lance, spear.

L 23: *Gan fle*: *gan* means to attain or win; *fle* means flee; this is an old English construction with no exact modern equivalent.

JOHN LYDGATE (1371–1449) was an English monk, credited as one of the foremost public poets of his era and known for exploring almost every major Chaucerian genre in his prolific career.