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### A Poem That Helped Make Lincoln Great

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#### Recommended Citation

Sommer, D. A., "A Poem That Helped Make Lincoln Great" (1945). *Stone-Campbell Books*. 355.  
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# A Poem That Helped Make Lincoln Great

The following poem was a particular favorite with Mr. Lincoln. Mr. F. B. Carpenter, the artist, writes that while engaged in painting at the White House, he was alone one evening with the President in his room, when he said: "There is a poem **which has been a GREAT favorite with me for years**, which was first shown to me when a young man by a friend, and which I afterward saw and cut from a newspaper and **learned by heart**. I would," he continued, "give a great deal to know who wrote it, but have never been able to ascertain."—William Cullen Bryant in his "Library of Poetry and Song."

**O, WHY** should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,  
Be scattered around and together be laid;  
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,  
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,  
The mother that infant's affection who proved;  
The husband that mother and infant who blessed,—  
Each all are away to their dwelling of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,  
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;  
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,  
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,  
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;  
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,  
Are hidden and lost in the depth of the grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap,  
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;  
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,  
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven,  
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,  
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,  
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flowers, or the weed  
That withers away to let others succeed;  
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,  
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;  
We see the same sights our fathers have seen,—  
We drink the same stream and view the same sun,  
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think,  
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would  
shrink,  
To the life we are clinging they also would cling;  
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but the story we can not unfold;  
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold;  
They grieved, but no wail from their slumbers will  
come;  
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died, aye, they died; and we things that are now,  
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,  
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,  
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,  
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;  
And the smiles and the tears, the song and the dirge,  
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,—  
O, **WHY** should the spirit of mortal be proud?

—William Knox.

NOTE: Though Mr. Lincoln loved humor, yet unlike so many today, that was incidental in his life; and the underlying principle which sobered him was the thought of death and what lies beyond. Our present generation hates such thoughts, yet death and the judgment lie before **EVERY ONE OF US**. The evidence is that **such thoughts** helped take away Lincoln's pride and selfishness, and through him, to make the world better; and that this poem helped do that for him.

If we all would have **OUR** children memorize this poem, as Lincoln did, maybe the world would have more Lincolns and fewer Hitlers. And its lesson against pride will help **each one of us**, if we will "learn it by heart." The poem may help us realize that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27.)

We must do something **quickly** to help counteract the influence of irreverent, silly, nasty, murderous radio programs and motion pictures, seeing our doped censors don't care.

## LINCOLN'S RELIGION, AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

By some of those who have studied the religious life of Mr. Lincoln, the decision is that he obeyed the gospel, but did not identify himself with any particular denomination. He probably was in confusion regarding such, just as millions of others have been. Possibly the following will help save us from confusion:

### How All Christians Can Be United, And Not Sacrifice Any Truth

We can all agree that we are saved by faith; but we can not agree that we are saved by "faith alone," for "faith without works is dead." (James 2:26.)

If we all would simply call ourselves "Christians" (Acts 11:26), and collectively, the "Church of God" (I Cor. 1:2), or "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16; Matt. 16:18), we would be closer together; but wearing names of men or peculiar doctrines of church government, etc., causes divisions.

We all agree on faith and repentance, and we can agree on "going down into the water," and "coming up out of the water" (Acts 8:38, 39), and on being "buried with Christ in baptism" (Rom. 6:4); but sprinkling and pouring for baptism were introduced long this side of the apostles.

We can all agree that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16); but we can not agree on baptizing infants who can not believe, nor that baptism has nothing to do with being "saved."

We can be united on "laying by in store as God hath prospered us" (I Cor. 16:2); but we can not unite on suppers and shows, etc., to raise money, nor on assessments which help drive the poor away.

We can agree on having a plurality of elders (called also bishops) to feed, oversee and rule the flock, for

that is in I Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 20:28; but we disagree on a one-man preacher-pastor to do the feeding which elders and others under them are commanded to do. (II Tim. 2:2; I Cor. 14:26.)

We can all scripturally unite our voices in "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19); but instrumental music in Christian worship was not used for hundreds of years.

The early Christians, individually and collectively, did missionary work (Acts 8:4; Phil. 4:15-17); aid work (Acts 9:36-43; I Cor. 16:1-3); Bible teaching work (Acts 18:26; II Tim. 2: 2); and we can unite on their example; but we disagree on **human organizations** of missionary societies, aid societies, orphans' homes, seminaries and Bible schools and colleges, established by **Christians** to do that work of the church. Paul says, "There is **one** body," "the Church" (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). He also says, "Unto God be glory **in the Church**" (Eph. 3:21), not in some **human** religious organization.

We are united on a plurality of elders (bishops) and deacons, "in **every** church" (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1—this being the only church government in the New Testament besides the inspired apostles, no higher ups); but we disagree on the human practice of having a **plurality** of churches for **every** bishop.

We can all agree that "if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him **not**" (2 John 10, 11); but we can **not** agree on "bidding them God-speed" who corrupt Christ's doctrine.

True, we have a liberty in Christ; but this does not consist in making new laws and practices, but only in **details** which God has **not** given of **commands** which he **has** given, and these details must be in harmony with the rest of the New Testament.

To be united we must all give up, not any truth, but **only our own HUMAN religious doctrines**; but it seems we are too proud to do this. How saddening, for "If any man shall add unto these things, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18); and, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

NOTE: This tract is 50 for \$1.00 to help keep going the thousands of FREE copies.—D. A. Sommer, Box 5838, Indianapolis 8, Ind.