THE POEMS OF

Phillis Wheatley

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

Edited with an Introduction by

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The wretch appall’d no longer can despise
But from the striking victim turns his eyes—
When this young martial genius did appear
The Tory chiefs no longer could forbear.
Ripe for destruction, see the wretches doom
He waits the curses of the age to come
In vain he flies, by Justice Swiftly chased
With unexpected infancy disgraced
Be Richardson for ever banish’d here.
The grand usurpers bravely vanquish’d Us
We bring the body from the wat’ry bower
To lodge it where it shall remove no more.
Snide behold, what Majestic Love
The illustrious retinue begins to move
With Secret rage, fair freedoms foes beneath
See in thy corps ev’n Majesty in Death

Phillis

AN ELEGY POEM
On the death of that celebrated Divine, and eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, the late Reverend, and pious George Whitefield, Chaplin to the Right Honourable the Countess of Huntingdon, &c. &c. Who made his Exit from this transitory State, to dwell in the celestial Realms of Bliss, on Lord’s Day, 9th of September, 1770, when he was seiz’d with a Fit of the Asthma, at Newbury-Port, near Boston, in New-England, In which is a Condolatory Address to His truly noble Benefactress the worthy and pious Lady

HUNTINGDON.—and the Orphan-Children in Georgia; who, with many Thousands, are left, by the Death of this great Man, to lament the Loss of a Father, Friend, and Benefactor.

By Phylls, a Servant Girl of 17 Years of Age, belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley, of Boston.—And has been but 9 Years in this Country from Africa.

Hail happy Saint on thy immortal throne!
To thee complaints of grievance are known;
We hear no more the music of thy tongue,
Thy wonted auditories cease to throng.
Thy lessons in unequal’d accents flow’d!
While emulation in each bosom glow’d;
Thou didst, in strains of eloquence refine’d,
Inflame the soul, and captivate the mind.
Unhappy we, the setting Sun deplore!
Which once was splendid, but it shines no more;
He leaves this earth for Heaven’s unmeasur’d height:
And worlds unknown, receive him from our sight;
There Whitefield wings, with rapid course his way,
And sails to Zion, through vast seas of day.

When his Americans were burden’d sore,
When streets were crimson’d with their guiltless gore!
Unival’d friendship in his breast now strove:
The fruit thereof was charity and love.

This poem was first published in Boston in 1770 as a broadside. The Massachusetts Spy for October 15, 1770, advertised it as "this day published," but it may have been published even sooner. It was also published in 1770 as a broadside once in Newport, four more times in Boston, once in New York, and once in Philadelphia. It also appeared as an addendum to the printing of Ebenezer Pemberton's "Memorials of Mr. Whitefield," a sermon on the death of Whitefield, which he preached on the same Thursday that the Spy advertised Wheatley's broadside for sale and which was published in Boston and London in 1771. (Pemberton was one of those who later would sign the letter "To the Publick," printed at the close of her book in 1773.) Further information about most of these printings can be found in Porter.

"Early American Negro Writings," pp. 305–65. The version given here apparently is the original, which was used in most of the early broadsides with only very minor variations, which were probably printers’ errors or changes. The poem’s various printings gave Wheatley her first wide fame as a poet. (Also see the introduction to this volume, the note to her poem to the Earl of Dartmouth, the poem which follows this one, and the dedication to her book.)

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Towards America—couldst thou do more
Than leave thy native home, the British shore,
To cross the great Atlantic's wat'ry road,
To see America's distress'd abode?
Thy prayers, great Saint, and thy incessant cries,
Have pier'd the bosom of thy native skies!
Thou moon hast seen, and ye bright stars of light
Have witness been of his requests by night!
He pray'd that grace in every heart might dwell;
He long'd to see America excell;
He charg'd its youth to let the grace divine
Arise, and in their future actions shine;
He offer'd that he did himself receive,
A greater gift his God himself can give:
He urg'd the need of him to every one;
It was no less than God's co-equal Son!
Take Him ye wretched for your only good;
Take Him ye starving souls to be your food.
Ye thirsty, come to his life-giving stream:
Ye Preachers, take him for your joyful theme;
Take Him, "my dear Americans," he said,
Be your complaints in His kind bosom laid:
Take Him ye Africans, he longs for you;
Impartial Saviour, is his title due;
If you will chase to walk in grace's road,
You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God.

Great Countess! we Americans revere
Thy name, and thus console thy grief sincere:
We mourn with thee, that thine obscurity plac'd,
In which thy Chaplain undisturb'd doth rest.

New-England sure, doth feel the orphan's smart;
Reveals the true sensations of his heart:
Since this fair Sun withdraws his golden rays,
No more to brighten these distressful days!

AN ODE OF VERSES On the much-lamented Death of the REV. MR. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, Late Chaplain to the Countess of Huntington; Who departed this Life, at Newbury near Boston in New England, on the Thirtieth of September, 1753, in the Fifty-seventh Year of his Age. Compos'd in America by a Negro Girl, Seventeen Years of Age, and sent over to a Gentleman of Character in London.

HAIL Happy Saint, on thy immortal Throne!
To thee Complaints of Grievance are unknown.
We hear no more the Music of thy Tongue,
Thy wonted Auditories cease to throng.

20. From a broadside in the Huntington Library. The version of this poem in Wheatley's 1773 book differs from the earlier versions, most of which were quite similar in text, but with varying pictorial, typographical, and artistic embellishments on the individual broadsides. However, the version given here (apparently printed in England) seems to be unique, especially in that it seems to have been adapted to a different audience in the omission of twelve lines near the end of the usual version which especially relate Whitefield to the Countess of Huntington, and in the addition of two quatrains and the Conclusion at the end. The "Gentleman of Character in London," to whom this version was sent, might have been John Thomson, who was a close supporter of Whitefield and who lived at Cramhall, near London (see Wheatley's letter to Thomson). Though Thomson was a friend and supporter of the Countess of Huntington, the lines about her which are omitted here probably were in the original version because it was intended for the countess and are dropped here out of deference to Thomson (or by him). Apparently Wheatley did send a copy of the poem (perhaps a printed one) to the

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