

THE POEMS OF

Phillis Wheatley

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

Edited with an Introduction by

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The wretch appal'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 infamy disgraced
 Be Richardson for ever banish'd here
 The grand Usurpers bravely vaunted Heir.
 We bring the body from the watry bower
 To lodge it where it shall remove no more.
 Snider behold with what Majestic Love
 The Illustrious retinue begins to move
 With Secret rage fair freedoms foes beneath
 See in thy conse¹⁷ ev'n Majesty in Death

Phillis

AN ELEGIAC POEM, ON THE DEATH OF THAT CELEBRATED DIVINE, AND
 eminent Servant of JESUS CHRIST, the late Reverend, and pious GEORGE
 WHITEFIELD,¹⁸ Chaplain 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, 30th 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

17. Corpse.

18. From a broadside at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The poem is listed in her 1772 Proposals, and an altered version is in her book. Whitefield (1714-79) was quite well known, and there were a number of special sermons and broadsides on the occasion of his death (see *Broadside Ballads, Etc.*, pp. 209-11), though Wheatley's poem seems to have been printed more than the others. Whitefield was an evangelist and leader of Calvinistic Methodism in Britain and America. He was much interested in orphans and other unfortunates. However, though sympathetic with the plight of blacks, he defended slavery on biblical grounds and even owned slaves.

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 PHILLIS, 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 complains of grievance are unknown;
 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 refin'd,
 Inflamm 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!
 Unrival'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 11, 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 *Heaven the Residence of the Saints*, 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 front of her book in 1773.) Further information about most of these printings can be found in Porter, "Early American Negro Writings," pp. 261-63. 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.)

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 pierc'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 not 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 chuse 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 condole thy grief sincere:
 We mourn with thee, that TOMB obscurely plac'd,
 In which thy Chaplain undisturb'd doth rest.
New-England sure, doth feel the ORPHAN's smart;¹⁹
 Reveals the true sensations of his heart:
 Since this fair Sun, withdraws his golden rays,
 No more to brighten these distressful days!

19. The countess was willed Whitefield's orphanage, Bethesda (about twelve miles from Savannah, Georgia) and its more than fifty slaves.

His lonely *Tabernacle*, sees no more
 A WHITEFIELD landing on the *British* shore:
 Then let us view him in yon azure skies:
 Let every mind with this lov'd object rise.
 No more can he exert his lab'ring breath,
 Seiz'd by the cruel messenger of death.
 What can his dear AMERICA return?
 But drop a tear upon his happy urn,
 'Thou tomb, shalt safe retain thy sacred trust,
 Till life divine re-animate his dust.

Sold by EZEKIEL RUSSELL, in Queen-Street, and JOHN BOYLES, in Marlboro-Street.

AN ODE OF VERSES²⁰ On the much-lamented Death of the REV. MR. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, Late Chaplain to the Countess of *Huntingdon*; Who departed this Life, at *Nemherry* near *Boston* in *New England*, on the Thirtieth of *September*, 1770, 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 *Huntingdon*, 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 Thornton, who was a close supporter of Whitefield and who lived at Clapham, near London (see Wheatley's letters to Thornton). Though Thornton was a friend and supporter of the Countess of *Huntingdon*, 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 Thornton (or by him). Apparently Wheatley did send a copy of the poem (perhaps a printed one) to the