

**Poems on various subjects, religious and moral / by Phillis Wheatley,
Negro servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England.**

Wheatley, Phillis, 1753-1784.

London : Printed for A. Bell, bookseller, Aldgate, and sold by Messrs. Cox and Berry, King-Street,
Boston, M DCC LXXIII [1773]

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/emu.010000351741>



Public Domain

http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

We have determined this work to be in the public domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address.



Published according to Act of Parliament, Sept. 1. 1773 by Arch.^d Bell.

Bookfeller N^o 8 near the Saracens Head Aldgate.

P O E M S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL,

B Y

P H I L L I S W H E A T L E Y,

NEGRO SERVANT TO Mr. JOHN WHEATLEY,
of BOSTON, in NEW ENGLAND.

L O N D O N:

Printed for A. ELL, Bookfeller, Aldgate; and sold by
Messrs. COX and BERRY, King-Street, BOSTON.

M D C C L X X I I I,

Entered at Stationers Hall.

Phillis Wheatley

D E D I C A T I O N .

To the Right Honourable the
COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON,

THE FOLLOWING

P O E M S

Are most respectfully

Inscribed,

By her much obliged,

Very humble,

And devoted Servant,

Phillis Wheatley.

*Boston, June 12,
1773.*

VARIOUS SUBJECTS. 15

TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
IN NEW-ENGLAND.

WHILE an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
The muses promise to assist my pen ;
'Twas not long since I left my native shore
The land of errors, and *Egyptian* gloom :
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand 5
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.
Still more, ye sons of science ye receive 10
The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,
How *Jesus'* blood for your redemption flows.
See him with hands out-stretcht upon the cross ;
Immense compassion in his bosom glows ;
He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn : 15
What matchless mercy in the Son of God !
When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,
He

He deign'd to die that they might rise again,
 And share with him in the sublimest skies,
 Life without death, and glory without end. 20

Improve your privileges while they stay,
 Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears
 Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.
 Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,
 By you be shunn'd, nor once remit your guard; 25
 Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.
 Ye blooming plants of human race divine,
 An *Ethiop* tells you 'tis your greatest foe;
 Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,
 And in immense perdition sinks the soul. 30

To

On being brought from A F R I C A to
A M E R I C A.

'T W A S mercy brought me from my *Pagan*
land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too;
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our fable race with scornful eye, 5
" Their colour is a diabolic die."

Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

On

Thoughts on the WORKS of PROVIDENCE.

ARISE, my soul, on wings enraptur'd, rise
To praise the monarch of the earth and
skies,

Whose goodness and beneficence appear
As round its centre moves the rolling year,
Or when the morning glows with rosy charms, 5
Or the sun slumbers in the ocean's arms :
Of light divine be a rich portion lent
To guide my soul, and favour my intent.
Celestial muse, my arduous flight sustain,
And raise my mind to a seraphic strain ! 10

Ador'd for ever be the God unseen,
Which round the sun revolves this vast machine,
Though to his eye its mass a point appears :
Ador'd the God that whirls surrounding spheres,
Which first ordain'd that mighty *Sol* should
reign 15
The peerless monarch of th' ethereal train :

F 2

Of

Of miles twice forty millions is his height,
 And yet his radiance dazzles mortal sight
 So far beneath—from him th' extended earth
 Vigour derives, and ev'ry flow'ry birth : 20
 Vaft through her orb ſhe moves with eaſy grace
 Around her *Phabus* in unbounded ſpace ;
 True to her courſe th' impetuous ſtorm derides,
 Triumphant o'er the winds, and furling tides.

Almighty, in theſe wond'rous works of thine, 25
 What *Pow'r*, what *Wiſdom*, and what *Goodneſs*
 ſhine ?
 And are thy wonders, Lord, by men explor'd,
 And yet creating glory unador'd !

Creation ſmiles in various beauty gay,
 While day to night, and night ſucceeds to day : 30
 That *Wiſdom*, which attends *Jehovah's* ways,
 Shines moſt conspicuous in the ſolar rays :
 Without them, deſtitute of heat and light,
 This world would be the reign of endless
 night :

In

VARIOUS SUBJECTS. 45

In their excess how would our race complain, 35
 Abhorring life! how hate its length'ned chain!
 From air adust what num'rous ills would rise?
 What dire contagion taint the burning skies?
 What pestilential vapours, fraught with death,
 Would rise, and overspread the lands beneath? 40

Hail, smiling morn, that from the orient main
 Ascending dost adorn the heav'nly plain!
 So rich, so various are thy beauteous dies,
 That spread through all the circuit of the skies,
 That, full of thee, my soul in rapture soars, 45
 And thy great God, the cause of all adores.

O'er beings infinite his love extends,
 His *Wisdom* rules them, and his *Pow'r* defends.
 When tasks diurnal tire the human frame,
 The spirits faint, and dim the vital flame, 50
 Then too that ever active bounty shines,
 Which not infinity of space confines.
 The sable veil, that *Night* in silence draws,
 Conceals effects, but shews th' *Almighty Cause*;
Night

Night feels in sleep the wide creation fair, 55
 And all is peaceful but the brow of care.
 Again, gay *Phœbus*, as the day before,
 Wakes ev'ry eye, but what shall wake no more;
 Again the face of nature is renew'd,
 Which still appears harmonious, fair, and good. 60
 May grateful strains salute the smiling morn,
 Before its beams the eastern hills adorn t

Shall day to day and night to night conspire
 To show the goodness of the Almighty Sire?
 This mental voice shall man regardless hear, 65
 And never, never raise the filial pray'r?
 To-day, O hearken, nor your folly mourn
 For time mispent, that never will return.

But see the sons of vegetation rise,
 And spread their leafy banners to the skies. 70
 All-wise Almighty Providence we trace
 In trees, and plants, and all the flow'ry race;
 As clear as in the nobler frame of man,
 All lovely copies of the Maker's plan.

The

VARIOUS SUBJECTS. 47

The pow'r the same that forms a ray of light, 75
That call'd creation from eternal night.

“ Let there be light,” he said : from his profound
Old *Chaos* heard, and trembled at the found :
Swift as the word, inspir'd by pow'r divine,
Behold the light around its maker shine, 80
The first fair product of th' omnific God,
And now through all his works diffus'd abroad:

As reason's pow'rs by day our God disclose,
So we may trace him in the night's repose :
Say what is sleep? and dreams how passing
strange ! 85

When action ceases, and ideas range
Licentious and unbounded o'er the plains,
Where *Fancy's* queen in giddy triumph reigns:
Hear in soft strains the dreaming lover sigh
To a kind fair, or rave in jealousy; 90
On pleasure now, and now on vengeance bent,
The lab'ring passions struggle for a vent.
What pow'r, O man ! thy *reason* then restores,
So long suspended in nocturnal hours ?

What

What secret hand returns the mental train, 95
 And gives improv'd thine active pow'rs again?
 From thee, O man, what gratitude should rise!
 And, when from balmy sleep thou op'rt thine
 eyes,
 Let thy first thoughts be praises to the skies.
 How merciful our God who thus imparts 100
 O'erflowing tides of joy to human hearts,
 When wants and woes might be our righteous lot,
 Our God forgetting, by our God forgot!

Among the mental pow'rs a question rose,
 "What most the image of th' Eternal shows?"
 When thus to *Reason*. (so let *Fancy* rove)
 Her great companion spoke immortal *Love*.

"Say, mighty pow'r, how long shall strife pre-
 vail,
 "And with its murmurs load the whisp'ring
 " gale?
 "Refer the cause to *Recollection's* shrine, 110
 "Who loud proclaims my origin divine,
 " The

VARIOUS SUBJECTS. 49

“ The cause whence heav’n and earth began to be,
 “ And is not man immortaliz’d by me ?
 “ *Reason* let this most causeless strife subside.”
 Thus *Love* pronounc’d, and *Reason* thus re-
 ply’d. 115

“ Thy birth, celestial queen ! ’tis mine to own,
 “ In thee resplendent is the Godhead shown ;
 “ Thy words persuade, my soul enraptur’d feels
 “ Resistless beauty which thy smile reveals.”
 Ardent she spoke, and, kindling at her
 charms, 120
 She clasp’d the blooming goddess in her arms.

Infinite *Love* where’er we turn our eyes
 Appears : this ev’ry creature’s wants supplies ;
 This most is heard in *Nature’s* constant voice,
 This makes the morn, and this the eve re-
 joice ; 125
 This bids the fost’ring rains and dews descend
 To nourish all, to serve one gen’ral end,

G

The

50 P O E M S O N

The good of man : yet man ungrateful pays
But little homage, and but little praise.

To him, whose works array'd with mercy
shine, 130

What songs should rise, how constant, how di-
vine!

To

To S. M. a young *African* Painter, on seeing
his Works.

TO show the lab'ring bofom's deep intent,
 And thought in living characters to paint,
 When first thy pencil did those beauties give,
 And breathing figures learnt from thee to live,
 How did those prospects give my soul delight, 5
 A new creation rushing on my sight?
 Still, wond'rous youth! each noble path pursue,
 On deathless glories fix thine ardent view :
 Still may the painter's and the poet's fire
 To aid thy pencil, and thy verse conspire ! 10
 And may the charms of each seraphic theme
 Conduct thy footsteps to immortal fame !
 High to the blissful wonders of the skies
 Elate thy soul, and raise thy wishful eyes,
 Thrice happy, when exalted to survey 15
 That splendid city, crown'd with endless day,
 Whose twice six gates on radiant hinges ring :
 Celestial *Salem* blooms in endless spring.

Calm

Calm and serene thy moments glide along,
 And may the muse inspire each future song ! 20
 Still, with the sweets of contemplation blest'd,
 May peace with balmy wings your soul invest !
 But when these shades of time are chas'd away,
 And darkness ends in everlasting day,
 On what seraphic pinions shall we move, 25
 And view the landscapes in the realms above ?
 There shall thy tongue in heav'nly murmurs flow,
 And there my muse with heav'nly transport glow :
 No more to tell of *Damon's* tender sighs,
 Or rising radiance of *Aurora's* eyes, 30
 For nobler themes demand a nobler strain,
 And purer language on th' ethereal plain.
 Cease, gentle muse ! the solemn gloom of night
 Now seals the fair creation from my sight.