Phillis Wheatley, â??On Virtueâ?•

Description

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

â??On Virtueâ?•

O Thou bright jewel in my aim I strive
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.
I cease to wonder, and no more attempt
Thine height tâ??explore, or fathom thy profound.
But, O my soul, sink not into despair,
Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand
Would now embrace thee, hovers oâ??er thine head.
Fain would the heavâ??n-born soul with her converse,
Then seek, then court her for her promisâ??d bliss.

Auspicious queen, thine heavâ??nly pinions spread,
And lead celestial *Chastity* along;
Lo! Now her sacred retinue descends,
Arrayâ??d in glory from the orbs above.
Attend me, *Virtue*, throâ?? my youthful years!
O leave me not to the false joys of time!
But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.
Greatness, or *Goodness*, say what I shall call thee,
To give me an higher appellation still,
Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay
O thou, enthronâ??d with Cherubs in the realms of day!

NOTES

7 *Virtue* â??A quality of people, divine beingsâ?• *(OED).*

9 *fain* â??Glad, rejoiced, well-pleasedâ?• *(OED).*

11 *pinions* â??The wing of a bird in flightâ?• *(OED).*

12 *Chastity* â??Purity from unlawful sexual intercourse; continenceâ?• *(OED).*

18 *Greatness* â??Innate nobility or dignity,â?¦grandeurâ?• *(OED); Goodness* â??The quality of being morally good; virtue; worthinessâ?• *(OED).*

21 *Cherubs* Angels.

Source: ***Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*** **(London, 1773), pp. 13-14. [Archive.org]**

Edited by Joseph R. Adams