

Phillis Wheatley, "Isaiah lxiii. 1-8"

Description

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

•Isaiah lxiii. 1-8•

Say, heav'nly muse, what king, or mighty God,
That moves sublime from Idumea's road?
In Bozrah dies, with martial glories join'd,
His purple vesture waves upon the wind.
Why thus enrob'd delights he to appear
5
In the dread image of the Power of war?

Compress'd in wrath the swelling wine-press groan'd,
It bled, and pour'd the gushing purple round.

"Mine was the act," th' Almighty Saviour said,
And shook the dazzling glories of his head,
10
"When all forsook I trod the press alone,
And conquer'd by omnipotence my own;
For man's release sustain'd the pond'rous load,
For man the wrath of an immortal God:
To execute th' Eternal's dread command
15
My soul I sacrific'd with willing hand;
Sinless I stood before the avenging frown,
Atoning thus for vices not my own."

His eye the ample field of battle round
Survey'd, but no created succours found;
20
His own omnipotence sustain'd the fight,
His vengeance sunk the haughty foes in night;
Beneath his feet the prostrate troops were spread,
And round him lay the dying, and the dead.

Great God, what light'ning flashes from thine eyes?
25
What power withstands if thou indignant rise?

Against thy *Zion* though her foes may rage,
And all their cunning, all their strength engage,
Yet she serenely on thy bosom lies,
Smiles at their arts, and all their force defies. 30

NOTES:

Title *Isaiah* First prophet in the Hebrew Bible.

2-3 *Idumea's road...Bozrah* "Idumea" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Edom," an area of modern-day Jordan settled by the Edomites; Bozrah is the capital of Edom, situated along the King's Highway, an "ancient thoroughfare" that traverses Jordan (*Britannica*).

4 *purple vesture* Mourning clothes (*OED*).

20 *succours* "Aid, help, assistance" (*OED*).

27 *Zion* "The biblical land of Israel" (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems of Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (London, 1773), pp. 60-61. [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History].

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