

# THE LITURGICAL SCRIPT OF THE CHURCH

## POETRY – JAKE ANDREWS

Study Guide

Session #2 | The Challenges of a New World: Phillis Wheatley & Anne Bradstreet

### INTRODUCTION

This week's lecture looks at poems by Anne Bradstreet and Phillis Wheatley. Bradstreet came to the New World as a Puritan from England, while Wheatley was an enslaved woman brought to the colonies just before the American Revolution. Dr. Andrews suggests that we could consider these as two ways into thinking about what poetry can open up for us: poems as a way to lament and as prophecy. Bradstreet grapples with the death of her granddaughter while Wheatley reminds America that people from Africa are also as worthy of redemption as the rest of humanity, which is to say that they are just as in need of it.

Here, you can find access to both poems:

- Anne Bradstreet, "In Memory...":  
<https://open.maricopa.edu/earlyamericanliteratureanthology/chapter/in-memory-of-my-dear-grandchild-elizabeth-bradstreet-who-deceased-august-1665-being-a-year-and-a-half-old-1665/>
- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought...":  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45465/on-being-brought-from-africa-to-america>

### NOTES

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Read Bradstreet's poem. What jumped out at you? In the lecture, Dr. Andrews talked about this poem as a lament. Did you read it that way? Why or why not?

Read Wheatley's poem. What jumped out at you? In the lecture, Dr. Andrews talked about this poem as a kind of prophetic utterance, but the imagery here might go against contemporary ideas. What did you make of it?

## **HOMEWORK**

On poets.org, you can find a history about both poets and many of their poems. Consider going to explore their work and learning more about their lives.

## **SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

Consider taking inspiration from one or both of these poets and trying to write your own lament or your own prophetic utterance. Then consider the following:

- What did it feel like to try and write a poem?
- What did you find the most difficult? The most fun?

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Open in prayer
2. Poetry wants to be read aloud. So, perhaps have a member of the group read Bradstreet's poem aloud.
  - a. What jumped out at you when you heard it aloud?
  - b. How might that have differed from what stood out to you when you read it?
  - c. In the lecture, Dr. Andrews talked about this poem as a lament. Did you read it that way? Why or why not?
3. If time allows, consider reading Wheatley's poem aloud.
  - a. What jumped out at you when you heard it aloud?
  - b. How might that have differed from what stood out to you when you read it?
  - c. In the lecture, Dr. Andrews talked about this poem as a kind of prophetic utterance, but the imagery here might go against contemporary ideas. What did you make of it?
4. Share what you learned from the presentation and from the poems.
5. Close in prayer

## RESOURCES TO GO DEEPER

If you found these poets interesting and want to explore more about them, these two books offer good places to start:

- Charlotte Gordon, *Mistress Bradstreet*. It is a biography with a rich discussion of Bradstreet's life and time, written by someone clearly inspired by Bradstreet.
- Robert Louis Gates, Jr. *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley*. It is a quick and engagingly written examination of the complex history of the reception of Wheatley, from her dismissal by the white Founding Fathers to her current dismissal by Black intellectuals.