Anne Bradstreet’s Religious Beliefs and Legacy for Her Children

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Introduction

Anne Bradstreet was born in 1612 in a wealthy puritan family in England, then migrated to Massachusetts in 1630 from Northampton. She was a religious lady, a mother of eight children, and a faithful wife. In addition to her other responsibilities, she wrote poetry and became a well-read scholar. She married at the age of 16, her father Thomas Dudley and husband Simon Bradstreet worked as the governors of Massachusetts. Marriage played an important role in her life, Puritan women think that marriage is a blessing from the God. In Puritan society, the primary role of women was to be wives and mothers and provide care to their families. They were supposed to do all household tasks and teach their children the Puritan lifestyle. She was born and raised in well-cultured circumstances, got a better education for her time, learning history, literature, and several languages.

Anne’s education gave her an edge and allowed her to write with authority about theology, history, politics, and medicine. She had a library of more than 9000 books for her personal use, however, most of them destroyed when her home burned down. This event was so painful that she wrote a poem with the title “Upon the Burning of Our House”. In this poem, she expressed her Puritan beliefs and rejected her grief and ager initially. However, at the end, she showed her human side opposite to her Puritan ways, she expressed her the pain caused by this event. This essay will highlight the attitude of Anne Bradstreet towards religious beliefs and the legacy she believes in leaving for her children.

Attitude Toward Religious Faith

Anne was the first American woman poet, and she was a religious woman who wrote about religion, society and her life. When her home was burned down in 1666, she wrote a poem in which she referred to it as a lesson from God. She expressed her deep mourns about this event, however, she viewed it as a lesson because God took all her material things away. She believed that she had become materialistic and was not relying on God. Her poetry reflects her typical Puritan beliefs, she believed in the eternal rewards of the good, and her earthly losses will strengthen her faith in God. When she was 19 years old, she got sick to death, but she didn’t complain about her pain in her poetry. She wrote a poem, “Upon a Fit of Sickness,” She showed her strong, well-power by saying, “The race is run, the field is won, the victory is mine, I see”. It shows that she had a strong faith in

God. She wrote about her illness, discomfort, and pain. She was not desiring to leave her husband and children, however, she believed that life in Heaven with her Creator will by joyful (Farthing, 2018).

She worked as a feminist as well; she advocated the upending of colonial gender hierarchy. In many poems, she stated that women and men have different roles in society; that is what God has intended. She believed that God has awarded women with many capabilities, they can be a poet and should be educated to play their role in society. She wrote about nature, and reflected on the beauty of nature and muses about the magnificent Creator. Her poems about nature were influenced by her Puritan beliefs. She wrote some poems about her love for her husband. She valued marriage as a blessing by God and praised husband-wife relations for love and respect for one another. Her strong maternal love was also reflected in her poems. She described her maternal love for her eight children and the relationship of love and respect with her husband, which is the convention of gender structure in Puritan society.

Her Legacy

She referred to her as “little babes” and the “dear remains” with her greatest affection with her children. In the dear remains, she refers to what she left behind for her children as her legacy. Children were considered a long-lasting and perpetual legacy in that era, and poetry was also understood as a source of legacy. She had left two legacies. One was her biological legacy, while the other was a poetic legacy (Bradstreet, 1967). Her children had the command to accomplish her poetic gift. She prolonged her motherly influence on her grandchildren by counselling her children to teach them the lessons that she had told them. Moreover, she believed that she had left the lesson of spirituality and meditations as a legacy. She believed that her good traits were worthy of imitation, and her version to be remembered by others she wished. She loved her children and her grandchildren, and for her maternal love, she didn’t surrender to Puritan doctrine, especially in case of their mortality.

Anne Bradstreet was undoubtedly a great poet, religious person, intellectual, and a great mother and wife. She was the first American woman poet; she wrote about religion, society, feminism, and her family and personal life. She was highly educated and had Puritan beliefs, she wrote explicitly on politics, religion, history, and social issues. She was a great mother to her eight children and grandchildren; she left a legacy of her poetry behind her as a legacy for her children. She was the first Puritan figure in the literature of America.

Works Cited

Bradstreet, Anne. The Works of Anne Bradstreet. Harvard University Press, 1967.

Farthing, Sophia. “Faith and Art: Anne Bradstreet’s Puritan Creativity.” (2018).