
A Study of How Anne Bradstreet and John Winthrop Are Similar

Comparison Between John Winthrop and Anne Bradstreet

Both John Winthrop and Anne Bradstreet were both writers and settlers in the first colonies of America. While they both wrote about their lives in America, as well as basic principles of Protestantism, their writing differs in purpose specifically on the topic of death. John Winthrop's speech to the first settlers aboard the Arbella is modeled after how they cannot die in the New World despite any obstacles that could be thrown at them. Anne Bradstreet who wrote many years after the colonies had settled, wrote about how her life will be much better after she dies and hopefully goes to heaven. Both writers still feature basic Protestant values in their writings, but how the two handle the subject of death varies entirely.

In Winthrop's and Bradstreet's writing, there is a clear discrepancy on how the two handle death. John Winthrop and other members aboard the Arbella believed that they were "The Elect," a special group of people who were sent personally by God to the New World. In John Winthrop's speech, he conveys to the people aboard the ship that their colony must survive, and never in his speech does he mention how their lives will be better once they die if you are predetermined to go to heaven, which is a principle ideology of Protestantism. While John Winthrop neglects the idea of life after death, he does this on purpose in order to motivate he is delivering his speech to. "If we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through this world" (Model of Christianity 9). Winthrop declares that no matter what, they need to survive to establish this colony. Winthrop writes that he and the other Puritans aboard the ship cannot fail God because if they do God will disown them and they will not be able to go to heaven, which is contrary to other Protestant values, especially compared to Bradstreet's writing. Thirty years later Anne Bradstreet writes on the brevity of life and that if you die and believe that you are a part of the positive side of predetermination, you will leave behind your life and start a better life in heaven. "That fearful sound of 'fire' and 'fire,' Let know man know is my Desire" (Verses upon the Burning of our House). Bradstreet writes of secretly wanting to die and hoping that she is predetermined to go to Heaven. In the poem, she conveys that if she is to die in a house fire, she knows that this is God's doing and she believes that it is her time to go to heaven. The contrast between the idea of death is entirely different between the two authors. Winthrop's ideas of having to survive once the colony has been established and looks to stay there for a long period of time. Once that there is no need to motivate the people to live, this idea seemed to disappear in favor of dying to live a better life.

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Bradstreet and Winthrop both believe in the basic principle of establishing a family. Winthrop mentions that it is essential to provide for your family because it supports his speech to motivate the members aboard the Arbella. "A man must lay up for posterity, the fathers lay up for posterity and children, and he is worse than an infidel that provideth not for his own" (Model of Christian Charity 3). Winthrop expects that the passengers aboard the Arbella to start their families and to stay with their children and make sure that they can survive into adulthood. This view seems to be rather intense, but the message remains clear that the people aboard the Arbella dedicate themselves to establishing this colony. Bradstreet, on the other hand, continues to think of life after death and hopes that the man who she has married will stay with her even after she dies. "Then while we live, in love let's so persevere, That when we live no more, we may live ever" (To My Dear and Loving Husband). Bradstreet, who is living in the colony at this point during her writing career, has established her family and is now able to look forward to what her life will be like with her family after death. Similar to Winthrop, Bradstreet also values a strong commitment to family.

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