



Creationism in Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672)

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Arriving in the wilderness of North America, Anne Bradstreet was made harshly aware of nature and its ontological resemblance to its Creator. Understanding that not only things but words become symbols and signs for spiritual facts, she argued instances of this by “logic of similitude.” In *Meditations* Bradstreet offered moral lessons analogically from a peacock, bread, honey, winter, corn, briars, lightening, leaves, iron, hops, stones, and fire, e.g. “spring is lively emblem of the resurrection.” The actions and words of man, such as “the wisest of men” also give examples. For Bradstreet, God created nature as composed of elements and in continual change, diurnal, seasonal, and although the world each year paradoxically begins in “youthful green,” unlike aging man, in the end will not be eternal as will man. In *Contemplations*, Bradstreet distinguished “trees” from “rivers,” trees, being located and insensible of time, but excelled by rivers which reflect God’s creation as the flowing nature of time and impermanence. Yet in contemplating God’s creation of the universe and of colonial America, Bradstreet observed the need for but the pain of distance, one place from another, earthly home and heavenly, and one creature from another. As well she contemplated the magnificence of creation discovered by both common man and science. More important than God as Creator, however, is God as present in the world, involved in human affairs, doling out storms and trials, sunlight and blessings. However, the transcendent reality of man’s unmediated relationship with God is contingent upon man’s own actions through which he creates his own life and relationship with God. Bradstreet’s elegy for her grand-daughter, Elizabeth, repudiates Puritanism’s distancing grandparent and grandchild and the possibility of a child being created depraved, and it questions the authoritative justice of God’s “hand” when against nature “guides nature and fate.”

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