



Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophecy in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775

Rebecca Larson

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In this pathbreaking book, Rebecca Larson restores a group of remarkable women to the American historical landscape. From Ann Moore, whose religious vision impelled her to preach to the British military during the French and Indian War, advising them to rely not on physical weapons and warfare but upon God; to Mary Weston, whose visit in the 1750s to Charleston, South Carolina, prompted the colonial legislature to adjourn in order to attend the noted preacher's meeting; to the celebrated Rachel Wilson, whose eloquence and piety drew crowds during her ministerial tour of the colonies in 1768 to 1769, Larson broadens our conception of women's activities before the American Revolution.

More than a thousand Quaker women ministers were active in the Anglo-American world during this era, when Quakers formed the third-largest religious group in the colonies. Some circulated throughout British North America; others crossed the Atlantic to deliver their inspired messages. In this astonishing public role, they preached in courthouses, meeting-houses, and private homes to audiences of men and women, to those of other faiths as well as to Quakers, to Native Americans and to slaves. At times they crossed paths with prominent figures such as Patrick Henry and Henry Laurens.

Larson offers striking insights on the ways in which this public, authoritative role for women affected the formation of their identities, their families, and their society. How did these spiritual leaders negotiate the challenges of marriage and childbearing while travelling thousands of miles on religious journeys? Some even traveled during pregnancy, leaving small children at home to be cared for by their husbands or the Quaker community. Through their interweaving narratives we hear long-silenced, forgotten voices that deepen our understanding of the once thriving transatlantic Quaker culture that balanced mysticism with pragmatism, recognizing female as well as male spiritual leaders.

Daughters of Light is an important contribution to the history of women and religion in early America.

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