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Rosalind Johnson, Independent scholar, Salisbury, Wiltshire, UK, rosalind.n.johnson@gmail.com

Book review: Rachel Cope and Zachary McLeod Hutchins (eds), *The Writings of Elizabeth Webb: A Quaker Missionary in America, 1697–1726*.

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Elizabeth Webb (née Hoopes? 1663–1726) was a Quaker missionary, originally from England, who preached widely in the American colonies. She would later settle there with her husband and family, crossing the Atlantic again several years later to preach in England, before returning to America where she would remain. Though her writings circulated widely in manuscript, none of her work was available in print until after her death, and most of her output remained unpublished. Probably as a result, she remains little known to scholars of the period, despite her influence during her life. This collection of five texts is therefore a welcome addition to the corpus of existing texts by eighteenth-century Quaker women, bringing together every extant text known to have been written by her, most of which were previously unavailable in print.

Two of Webb's works were prepared for publication. A 1712 letter written by Webb to Anthony William Boehm, one-time chaplain to George, Prince of Denmark, late husband to Queen Anne, recounts Webb's youthful struggles with faith and her call to go to America. She also recalls for Boehme her disquiet at seeing enslaved Africans in the American colonies, and the dream telling her to minister equally to both the free and the enslaved. It was the earliest of Webb's works to be published, though not until 1781, and was reprinted thereafter. Webb submitted her most substantial work, a commentary upon the Book of Revelation, 'Some Meditations with some Observations upon the Revelations of Jesus Christ', to the Philadelphia Overseers of the Press, who gave her permission to publish it but would not fund it. Nevertheless, it circulated widely in manuscript. As a commentary, it is a key text of apocalyptic writing; Webb saw Revelation as politically relevant to her contemporaries in the American colonies. It continued to find relevance to during the American Revolution, over half a century later. Three personal writings complete the collection: Webb's account of her preaching mission in America from 1697 to 1699, a 'Short Memorial' of her early life and conversion to Quakerism, and a letter of spiritual advice to her children.

The collection is prefaced by an introduction highlighting the important themes of Webb's writing; her visionary experiences, her millennialism, and the importance of religious community. Webb's writing also represents a key source for the experience of women in the Society of Friends; she was not the only Quaker woman to undertake a missionary journey in the American colonies, but she faced obstacles. Her husband, Richard, was initially reluctant to support her call to preach there, though he later relented, and once she had crossed the Atlantic, she experienced occasional restrictions on her preaching mission, not from Friends, but from the physical dangers for which she felt, as a woman, she was unprepared. These dangers were real, but the editors acknowledge that greater dangers had been faced by an earlier generation of Quaker women ministering in the colonies who suffered severe penalties for their proselytising activities.

The book is fully annotated throughout and includes a short bibliography of suggested further reading. It represents a major contribution towards the work of scholars working on the history of Quakers on both sides of Atlantic, and on the spiritual writings of early modern women. It is to be hoped that, following the publication of this collection, Elizabeth Webb will finally receive the attention she deserves, not only in academic works, but in more popular accounts of Quakers in colonial America.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

