



Canela, E., 'Naomi Baker, *Voices of Thunder: Radical Religious Women of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2025), pp.320. ISBN: 9781836391197. Hardback, £16.99', *Quaker Studies*, 30/2 (2025): pp. 1–4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/qs.26564>



**Naomi Baker, *Voices of Thunder: Radical Religious Women of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2025), pp.320. ISBN: 9781836391197. Hardback, £16.99**

Erica Canela, University of Birmingham, [ericanela@gmail.com](mailto:ericanela@gmail.com)

---

A book review for Naomi Baker, *Voices of Thunder: Radical Religious Women of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2025).

---



Naomi Baker's *Voices of Thunder: Radical Religious Women of the Seventeenth Century* is a vivid and meticulously researched exploration of women whose spiritual authority shook the patriarchy of the seventeenth century. Drawing on polemical pamphlets and spiritual autobiographies, Baker brings these women to the forefront, where they belong. Baker's central argument – that these women's voices were not marginal but thunderous in their time – positions this book as a significant contribution to ongoing scholarship on religious and political dissent, gender, and spirituality. For Quaker scholars, Baker's attention to Quaker women will be of particular interest, offering fresh perspectives and welcomed depth into the lives of some of the women who truly shaped the theology and social aspects of early Quakerism.

Written in a scholarly yet accessible manner, *Voices of Thunder* has been published when there is an increasing focus on the seventeenth century, early modern dissent, and women's history. Building on the work of scholars including Phyllis Mack and Hilary Hinds, Baker situates these radical women within the broader debates around prophecy, persecution, and spiritual authority. The introduction sets the scene and provides a thorough yet concise overview of the period.

Structured around vivid case studies, Baker's narrative moves from visionary prophets and impoverished mothers to Quaker preachers. *Voices of Thunder* is split into five parts: 'Mine own experience', 'The prophetic stage', 'She-preachers', 'To the ends of the earth', and 'Apocalyptic women'. We are introduced to Rose Thurgood and Anne Wentworth, revealing the entanglement of domestic suffering with theological conviction, while Sarah Wight's dramatic story is a compelling page-turner. Anna Trapnel's controversial actions placed her at serious risk at a time when accusations of witchcraft were rife. Quaker scholars will pay particular attention to the biographies of Hester Biddle, Mary Fisher, Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers. Their lives and travels are recounted in brilliant detail; Baker deftly highlights how Quaker women embodied and extended the principle of spiritual equality. This is a book that highlights the lived experience of women in this tumultuous century of change. Baker notes that 'these women were driven by a powerful sense of individual conviction, and the consequences were far-reaching' (p.14).

The book's greatest strength is its accessibility. These were complex times and fascinating women. With such a rich subject, Baker writes with clarity, ensuring that these women are not romanticised or presented as helpless victims. *Voices of Thunder* makes a significant contribution to the study of radical religion and gender in the seventeenth century. Baker has recovered the voices of these women and placed them centre stage and, in doing so, challenges the assumption that women's participation in religious debate was peripheral. For Quaker scholars, *Voices of Thunder* underscores

the importance of Quaker women and the extraordinary actions they felt empowered to take.

*Voices of Thunder* is a timely book that restores these radical religious women to the centre of the debates of the seventeenth century. Its combination of biographical detail, textual analysis, and expert storytelling makes it a valuable resource for scholars of both Quakerism and radical dissent.

---

### **Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

---

