

Adcock, Rachel, *Baptist Women's Writings in Revolutionary Culture, 1640-1680* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Farnham, Ashgate, 2015; hardback; pp. 232; 5 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781472457066.

The role of women in early modern English religion has been brought to the fore in recent years. While non-conformist sects, and the roles women played in them, have been studied, Baptist women, and their published writings, are still largely neglected. Rachel Adcock's book does an excellent job of addressing this lacuna, while also bringing to light the stories of many, hitherto unknown, women.

According to the Book of Acts, the last days would see God pour out his spirit on his sons and daughters, allowing them to prophesy. Baptists, and other non-conformist sects, viewed the English Civil Wars as proof of Christ's imminent second coming, giving women previously unparalleled spiritual authority. Indeed, as Adcock demonstrates, women were able to subvert their perceived role as the 'weaker' sex because they 'could be viewed as effective conduits for the word of God', as 'their passivity could allow for God to speak through them' (p. 4).

As is clear from the book's title, Adcock focuses on the published works of Baptist women. She deftly examines how these women 'enjoyed an authority and independence that were not available to women in other cultural contexts' of the early modern period (p. 1). Adcock draws out the power that these women could wield, sometimes against the wishes of their husbands.

Adcock deftly interweaves the stories of familiar figures—like Anna Trapnel and Susanna Parr—with stories of women who emphasise the independence Baptist women could exert, such as Anne Pharepoint. Pharepoint took a non-Baptist husband but, during questioning by her congregation, was adamant that 'she would continue to walk with the church, despite her husband's beliefs' (p. 6).

The book is well grounded in the scholarship. Adcock's introduction, while impressive, could potentially have been split into two separate chapters so that her excellent analysis of the persons and texts she includes would not be lost in the thorough literature review and explanation of her methodology. This, however, is a very minor critique of an excellent, and important, piece of work.

Scholars and students, both familiar and unfamiliar with the book's topic, will glean much from this fine addition to the growing scholarship that emphasises the lived experiences of early modern women.

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