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Witness, Warning, and Prophecy: Quaker Women's Writing, 1655–1700

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The book also provides an overview of Catholic spirituality in the Renaissance and seventeenth century. The reader gets a clear view of the ideas that influenced De Sales's work and how his transformation took place in the Chablais mission. Donlan's highlighting of the theology of weakness associated with the nuns in the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary is especially interesting because it shows the effect of Salesian theology on women. One might question if this book's take on De Sales is a bit too overtly religious; however, the book's ideas are argued very well. Contributing to the scholarship on French militant Catholicism and the figure of François De Sales, this book could be read by any Renaissance specialist. Its organization is very clear and leaves no room for guesswork on the part of the reader; it is well written, well proven, and clear—while providing a new take on François de Sales and Catholic spiritual history. It is therefore recommended to all who are interested in the man and his culture.

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Feroli, Teresa, and Margaret Olofson Thickett, eds.

Witness, Warning, and Prophecy: Quaker Women's Writing, 1655–1700.

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 60 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 527. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. xxii, 413 + 3 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-584-0 (paperback) US\$59.95.

Quaker women produced around 220 printed texts in the second half of the seventeenth century. Their writings proclaim the “inner light” or voice of God, speak out against persecution and injustice, critique the actions of religious and political authorities, and warn readers of God's approaching judgment. In *Witness, Warning, and Prophecy*, editors Teresa Feroli and Margaret Olofson Thickett showcase a remarkable sample of these texts, highlighting the fascinating range of ways in which Quaker women contributed to the growth of their religious movement and interrogated the broader spiritual, political, and social concerns of their time.

The volume appropriately contributes to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series, which features the voices of women whose writings challenged traditional gender roles and structures of the period. The Quakers are perhaps best known for their belief in the indwelling Spirit and their primary allegiance to this “inner light”; if early Quakers, partly for this reason, “never ceased to shock and trouble their contemporaries,” their outspoken women were especially troublesome (2). Quakers acknowledged men and women as spiritual equals, which meant that women as well as men were encouraged to preach and write on behalf of their faith. The women featured in this volume, however, speak not only on private spiritual matters or on Quaker belief, but also on the more public (and radical) concerns of their movement, entering conversations about “liberty of conscience, separation of church and state, and social justice as though these ideas were self-evident” (2).

The forty edited texts in this volume exclude the works of Quaker leader Margaret Fell, which have recently appeared in a separate companion volume edited by Jane Donawerth and Rebecca M. Lush. *Witness, Warning, and Prophecy* presents an impressive range of Quaker voices, genres, and literary styles; it is perhaps most valuable in making these varied texts accessible and approachable. Feroli and Thickstun include texts that are not available on *Early English Books Online*, while in other cases, they have carefully cross-checked copies on *EEBO* against additional library holdings. Each text is preceded by its own succinct biographical and contextual headnote, and extensive footnotes help the reader to identify frequent biblical allusions and obscure contemporary references. The collection’s detailed introduction is especially helpful in sketching the progression of the Quaker movement within its political and social contexts, highlighting Quaker views on authority and leadership as well as the group’s collective persistence in the face of conflict and suffering.

As the editors note, most seventeenth-century Quaker writings are considered “prophecies” in that they claimed divine inspiration and sought to communicate the will of God. A lengthy first section of the volume is thus devoted to prophetic genres, including four subsections that distinguish between “Proclaiming the Inner Light,” “Directives to Political and Religious Authorities,” “Warnings,” and “Sufferings.” While generic divisions are quite useful in identifying the dominant features of each diverse group of texts, these groupings remain loose as most of the prophetic texts simultaneously proclaim, direct, warn, and meditate upon personal or communal sufferings. These bold

and often dramatic texts are striking for both the religious conviction they convey and the urgency with which their writers deliver God's message—often to figures of religious or political authority (such as Mary Howgill's letter to Oliver Cromwell [1657]). A second, shorter section on "Late Seventeenth-Century Quietism and Organization" documents the Quaker movement's eventual shift away from enthusiasm toward concerns of community and structure. The texts collected here highlight women's efforts to preserve early Quaker experiences (and especially, sufferings) for posterity, commemorating exemplary lives and bearing witness to persecuted Friends who, as Theophila Townsend writes of Jane Whitehead, "bore a living Testimony for [God's] holy name" (288). Other writings defend and debate the functions of the separate "Women's Meetings" established by George Fox in 1671 and thus open a space for considering women's changing roles within the spiritual community.

The anthology's organization and textual selection allow for both a chronological understanding of the Quaker movement's concerns and an appreciation for Quaker women's varied and nuanced approaches to the task of proclaiming God's will. For example, while narratives of Quaker women's suffering are relatively familiar, we find experiments with verse here as well, including Mary Mollineux's imaginative "Meditations Concerning Our Imprisonment Only for Conscience Sake" (1684) which contrasts the "outward" walls of her confinement in Lancaster Castle with the "verdant Plains of Liberty" in her soul (251). Just as striking, however, are the continuities of expression that persist through the pages of this volume. The texts in this edition are quite extraordinary for the linguistic and ideological similarities that emerge despite individual agendas, contexts, and approaches, and for the sense of communal force produced by shared language, imagery, and references across genres. Joint authorship was common in early Quaker publication (and several co-authored texts are included here), but Quaker writing itself appears a collective endeavour, allowing echoed words, phrases, and ideas to forge a sense of community between texts. We owe much to the editors of this volume for making such connections apparent.

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