

A DISCOVERY

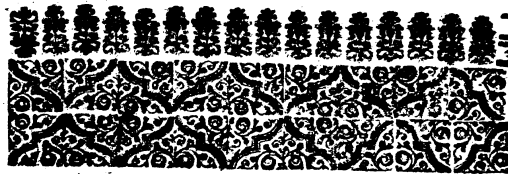
OF
Six Women-Preachers, in *Middlesex,*
Kent, Cambridge, and Salisbury.

WITH
A Relation of their Names, Manners,
Life, and Doctrine.

Their Names.
{ *Anne Hempfall.* } { *Ioane Bauford.* } { *Eliz. Bancroft.* }
{ *Mary Bilbron.* } { *Susan May.* } { *Arabella Thomas.* }



Printed, 1641.



The six Women-Preachers.

Anne Hempfall,
Ioan Bausford,
Elizabeth Bancroft } and { *Mary Bilbrow,*
Susan May,
Arabella Thomas.

IN ancient times have I read of Prophetesses, but not untill of late heard of Women Preachers, their onely reason or cause of preaching, was, that there was a deficiency of good men, wherefore it was but fit, that vertuous women should supply their places, they were (men they did meane) good for nothing, but to make their Texts good by expounding the language of the Beast, but they themselves would preach nothing, but such things as the spirit should move them.

The first and chiefe of this female and Sacerdoticall function, was one *Anne Hempfall*, living in the Parish of Saint *Andrewes* Holborne, neere London, and in the County of Middlesex, upon a certaine time, she having a minde, said she was moved to bee zealously affected, called an assembly

of her bibbing Gossips together, whole thoughts were beat more upon the strong water bottle, then upon the uses or doctrines which their holy sifter intended to expound unto them, but being come to the house of this *Anne Hempstall*, zealous *Nan* spake to them after this manner,

Beloved sisters, this last night I dreamed a strange Dream, moreover me thought I saw a vision, in which *Anna* the propheteffe was presented unto my view, the splendour of whose countenance did cast me into a trance, wherein I lay untill the next morning, and the morning being come, I could conceive no interpretation of my Dream but this, that I should imitate godly *Anna*, by preaching unto you, as she prophesied to others; her speech strook them all into an astonishment, at which, this prophane *Anne* cryed out, Now doth the holy Ghost descend downe upon you, wherefore give care unto mee, then did she begin to talke, and speake unto them that which first came into her minde, but the chiefe matter of her Text was this, That womans haire was an adorning to her, but for a man to have long haire, it was a shame unto him, which the Scripture it selfe cryeth fie upon; long did shee preach, and longer I dare avouch then some of the audience were willing, for some of them had as far home as *White Chappell*, wherefore her longirude might cause a brevitude of her sucking the *Aquaviva* bottle; two houres being expired, and the bottome of the stool beginning to look open-mouthed with her furious stumps, shee gave them

them as much peace as in her lay, and so concluded.

Mary Bilbrow, one of the Audience, being of the Parish of *Saint Giles* in the fields, desired them to bee all with her the next morning, and after Sermon they should have good fat Pig to breakfast, besides a cup of Sack or Claret to wash it down: They all agreed unto it, and making use of all the Rhetorick which they were borne unto, they gave her thanks, and so for that time a Bottle of Ale, or two being devoured, they departed every one to their owne houses. The next morning they met all together at the house of *Mary Bilbrow*, whose husband was a good honest Bricklayer; and so soone as they came within the doors of her house, she brought them all into her Parlour, as shee called it, and in stead of stools and cushions, shee had provided before hand, three Bricks apiece for them to sit upon, her reason was this, shee thought they would not sit much, because women to good instructions love standing: her Pulpit was framed very substantially of Brick, so high that scarce any thing but her standing up tippet could be seen. She began then very devoutly to make an *ex tempore* prayer, but before shee had scarce spoken twenty words, her daughter came running in very hastily, telling her a Gentleman at *Bloomsbury* stayed to speake with her about urgent occasions; which hearing, shee leapt out of her prayer into this serious meditation, I think it be the Gentleman I was withall at

Salisbury Court, whom I promised this day to meet withall: whereupon she left her pulpit, spread the cloath, and brought her Gossips in a Pig, according to her promise; who fed heartily, and so departed. So much at this time for Middlesex female Teachers.

Now give mee leave to take water, and goe to Gravesend, and so further into Kent, where I shall tell you of one *Ioan Banford* in the Towne of Feversham, who taught in Feversham, that husbands being such as crossed their wives wills, might lawfully be forsaken.

Then was there one *Susan May* of Ashford in the County of Kent also, which preached in a Barne there, that the Divell was the father of the Pope, the Pope the father of those which did weare Surplices; wherefore consequently the Divell was the father of all those which did not love Puritans.

There was likewise one *Elizabeth Bancroft* in Ely in Cambridgeshire, where Bishop *Wren* first going to place Altars there, preached behinde the Minister upon a saturday, that it was fit upon Sunday to sacrifice the Popes Bird upon his owne Altar.

Then lastly, there was one *Arabella Thomas*, a Welch woman, which lived in the Citie of Salisbury, which preached, and in her Sermon said, that none but such painfull creatures as her selfe should goe to heaven: for those Ministers which did not preach twice upon every Sabbath day, she said,

said, that very shortly the blacke Raven by day, and the white Owle by night should scratch out their eyes.

Thus have I declared some of the female Academies, but where their Universtitie is, I cannot tell, but I suppose that Bedlam or Bridewell would be two convenient places for them. Is it not sufficient that they may have the Gospel truly and sincerely preached unto them, but they must take their Ministers office from them? If there had been such a dearth of the Gospel as there was in the reigne of *Q. Mary*, it had been an occasion somewhat urgent. But God bee praised it was not so, but that they seemed to bee ambitious, and because they would have superiority, they would get upon a steele, or in a tub in stead of a pulpit. At this time I have described but six of them, ere long I fear I shall relate more, I pray God I have no cause; and so for this time I conclude.

FINIS.

