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A QUESTION FOR
CHURCHWOMEN

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ANGLICAN GROUP FOR THE
ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO
THE HISTORIC MINISTRY OF
THE CHURCH

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A Question for Churchwomen.

Christianity teaches us to love and serve God and our neighbour and there was a time when the only way for women who desired to devote themselves entirely to this ideal of service was to enter the cloister where they might teach the ignorant, succour the aged and care for the sick and dying. In these days it is not necessary to cut oneself off from the world in order to serve it and women may and do become doctors, nurses, teachers, almoners, and engage in every kind of welfare work for the bodies, minds, and souls of their fellow men and women, both here and overseas.

But there is one door of service which is closed and that is the door of the Ministry of the Church. Through these other callings woman can indeed exercise ministries of healing, of solace, of teaching, but if she desires to do direct pastoral and priestly work and to have the blessing and authority of the Church in doing it, she meets with a definite "No!"

She cannot be an ordained priest and pastor or have that special authorisation which would bring her special grace and power and would enable her to speak in the Church's name.

This is an appeal to Churchwomen who have felt the call to service and who are fulfilling it to ask themselves a question—a question which they have probably never thought of asking, just because it can at present expect no response. The question is: 'Ought I to consider the possibility of offering myself as a candidate for Holy Orders?' There is no doubt that their brothers are encouraged to ask this question: we pray that they should do so—but the purpose of this paper is to invite women to consider the question too. You feel that the world needs you: you may even feel that the Church does so too, and your present work may be a fulfilment of that need—but may it not be true that if you had been born a boy you would have had to face the question of Orders and would have faced it gladly? There is a homely proverb that what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over and at present it is only a few women whose voca-

tion to the Ministry seems to them so deep and pressing that they cannot refrain from expressing their longing publicly, though in all humility.* But there must be many others for whom the question has never yet arisen, because they have never considered the possibility. Will you ask yourself the question now, and whatever the emotions aroused in you, will you ask a further question: "Why does the Church refuse women?"

The Secretary of the *Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women to the Historic Ministry of the Church* will gladly discuss the whole matter with you and you are invited to write to her. Do not hesitate if you find yourself in disagreement with the Group—we shall be glad to hear from you in any case. The address is:—

Mrs. Ronald Best,
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London, N.W.11.

H. C. ESCREET.

*See 'What Crime or Impediment?', published by the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women.

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