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GIRLS AND THE CHURCH.

The Committee of the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women to the Historic Ministry of the Church submitted a Questionnaire to Headmistresses of Girls' Secondary Schools in order to ascertain the reason of the apparent indifference to religion shown by the present generation, and whether work for the Church was ever presented to school-girls as a possible occupation after leaving school; and if not, why not?

It was hoped that the replies would also show whether the present position of women's work is regarded as satisfactory, and whether, if the ordination of women were possible, this would make any real difference to

the situation.

Accordingly the following Questionnaire was drawn up and sent to Headmistresses:—

- 1. How far does the present indifference denote a lack of interest in the Church itself and in organized religion generally?
- 2. How far does this indifference result from the scope of the work and status now offered to women in the Church?
- 3. What change, if any, would there be in the attitude of the girls if ordination to the Historic Ministry of the Church were open to them?

139 replies were received to the Questionnaire sent out to 655 Headmistresses—just over 21%. Of these, 81 are known to be Anglican, 1 is a member of the Church of Ireland, 35 belong to the Free Churches; while the denomination of the remaining 22 is not known.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

It has not been at all easy to place the answers obtained in definite "yes" and "no" categories; and, in order that a fair idea of the trends of the answers may be given, it has been found necessary to sub-divide

them a good deal. In general, the Headmistresses express great interest in the questions raised, and hardly one failed to answer in some form the first question about indifference being due to lack of interest in religion. A few seemed to interpret their position as heads of undenominational schools as involving a completely detached attitude, so that they think it wrong even to suggest the consideration of work in the Church

to which a girl may belong.

It is obvious also that in many cases the opinions of the Headmistress herself are bound to influence her view of the girls' attitude, especially in the most controversial question of ordination. Even when they have consulted the upper forms directly, there would naturally be a difference in the response according to the way the question is put. It is noticeable that very rarely has a Head definitely given the girls' views when opposed to her own.

In some cases the answers are evidently biased by the Heads' own view of such questions as the Church's

attitude to war, social questions, etc.

It has not been possible to say in every case whether the Headmistress is Anglican or not; the table of figures gives this information when known, and when it is doubtful.

These two uncertainties might be thought to vitiate the conclusions arrived at, but the great majority base their answers on facts. Even when the girls have not been asked directly, the Headmistress has in mind talks with girls on leaving, and instances of old girls who have taken up Church or missionary work in after life.

Ouestion 1.—How far does the present indifference denote a lack of interest in the Church itself and in organized religion generally?

GROUP "A" say that there is a general lack of interest in the Church and/or in organized religion 73

Notes: A fair number speak of this as partial and mainly in homes where religion is little thought of or practised.

Some speak of it as existing more widely at the age of 16 or so; others of enthusiasm at school which fades away after leaving. The main reasons for indifference (besides those coming under other headings) are:—

(a) Ignorance on the part of parents 13 Ignorance of opportunities (some Heads also admitted this) That the Church is out of date or out of touch 18 (d) That the Church fails to teach adequately 20

Headmistresses of this Group belong to the denominations as follows:—

Anglican	 	41
Free Church	 	15
Not Known	 	17

GROUP "B" say that there is little or no indifference to religion. A few extend this to the Church and the practice of religion in worship 66

Notes: Many say that a good proportion of girls do Church work at home, or take up missionary work afterwards, or work for the Lambeth Diploma or for a degree in Theology. Those in country or provincial town schools speak much more favourably of keenness about religion and worship than those in large towns.

In regard to the first question, the reasons, when given, for indifference are very varied, perhaps because this question does not make very clear what kind of indifference is meant. The question refers to indifference to Church work, but some Headmistresses have taken it as indifference to Church or religion generally.

61.* I have taught scripture throughout the school for many years, and one fact which has always struck me is the appalling ignorance of children as to the fundamentals of their faith—facts which my generation, at least, would have known in the nursery they have never heard of—and there, I think, lies the root of the trouble: the lack of religion in the home and then the lack of sound and systematic teaching in Church. The greater number of my girls, who are fairly well-to-do, spend their weekends somewhere with a carthe obligation of Sunday worship is unknown to them.

^{*}This and subsequent numbers are retained from the original letters for purposes of reference.

40. My strong impression is that indifference to Church attendance is due to a great falling off on the part of the parents of the present school children and that this was the result in a large measure of (various objections to services).

The modern parents are absorbed in making a living and running a healthy, pleasant home and garden, with Sunday

'runs in the car' for the whole family.

77b. The senior girls consider that indifference to all Church matters is caused by lack of religion in the homes of the leisured classes—few parents appear to be church-going members or to take much interest in Church matters, and they do not consider that any religious education at school can make up for this.

One fact that emerges is that few, if any, speak of complete lack of interest in religion, and several notice a great improvement in this respect in the last ten to thirty years, and some speak of much enthusiasm. But only a small number extend this to organized religion or church (it is not always certain whether this last means Church of England or any other organized body).

- 62. Form VI were very much interested, and said the idea of such religious work had never occurred to them. They agreed it was a great pity that a Sixth form should not have such work put before them as a possibility.
- 6. Many Sixth form girls and Junior staff expressed amazement that there was any career for women in the Church to-day. This shows my negligence in putting it before them as a possible career, as well as the fact that parents have been equally neglectful. I think much might be done to present the opportunities already available to girls in an attractive manner.
- 31. There is a lack of interest in the Church, and much more might be done by the clergy in giving (little) duties in connexion with the Church services to growing girls, so that they are made to feel that they are wanted. They must be asked—it is rare that they will volunteer, but that does not mean they are unwilling. The idea of service in the Church might then be started.
- 48. We think that the indifference is due partly to the small demand which the Church makes upon its members, and the ignorance of what opportunities of personal service the Church has to offer them. If the Church asked more self-sacrifice of young people they would give more. The idealism of young people and their desire for an ideal i seen in the Dictator countries, which exploit it at the expense of religion.

43. The regrettable impression is that "women who live by Church work are pretty grim."

It is tragic to realize that a large store of potential devotion does exist, and that it is not being drawn upon to anything like the extent that it might be, with the result, in many cases, that interest in religion fades out when the girls leave school. What exactly ought to be done by all branches of Christianity to make young people realize the necessity of an organized body as a vehicle for the life of the spirit is another matter. A number of the reasons given for thinking that the Church is out of date or out of touch has been included as a possible help to the solution of this problem.

- 6. I have certainly found among the young people I know a very marked indifference to organised religion, and in some quarters a very out-spoken criticism of the Church—to the effect that it is divorced from real life. ("What we hear in church doesn't seem to have anything to do with everyday life," as one of my Sixth form said. This is obviously due to lack of instruction, but has an element of bitter truth in it.) As they are keenly interested in religion—e.g., courses of lessons on Practical Christianity and Comparative Religion have been followed very keenly, with much asking of questions and discussion. I can only put this indifference down to the fact that the Church fails somewhere.
- 50. There is a definite lack of interest in the Church itself; in fact it seems to have ceased to be part of the organized life of people in a great city such as London. I do not think the same position exists in the country and in small towns. I feel that this lack of interest extends to organized religion generally, but not to the same extent. The emphasis laid by the Roman Catholic Church on the sacramental side and by the Free Churches on the preaching and social side seem to me to hold the congregations better after childhood. So many parents whom I interview tell me that they are 'ordinary Church of England,' which appears to mean going to church for baptisms, marriages, and funerals, and that is all.
- 22b. The Church attracts so few people who seem to know how to appeal to the young, more especially how to appeal to girls. I think, however, and this conclusion is based on remarks in the girls' own papers, that the young are almost in despair about the Church itself. I put this down to the fact that, whereas women and Free Church speakers who come to the school spend, to my knowledge, long periods in preparation and give the girls carefully thought-out addresses, the clergy on the whole prepare very little and in

some cases not at all. They are too often men of inferior intellectual calibre, apt to resent the questioning attitude

of youth, rather than to welcome it.

Secondly, we find a certain number of ordained men who do not seem to feel that to address a girls' school is a glory to their manhood, and the girls, of course, are bound to realize this. The most successful kind of clergyman that we have is the old kindly type, but even they do not give the girls much help intellectually.

- 96. In so many cases men seem to be afraid to make a big demand for fear of frightening away the young. They want a big demand, they want and are prepared for sacrifice, if only the reason seems to them to be adequate.
- 38. Many intelligent and serious-minded girls actively desiring to serve, and with high ideals, do not find the Church inspiring as an institution. This is partly because they are questioning its dogmas and finding that the Church gives an inadequate answer to their questions, but more because they do not find in organized religion the vigorous life that they find in secular institutions. In some Sunday schools and many churches the teaching is less good than in the day schools, the services are lifeless, and the provision for youth inadequate. And it is no good for us in the schools to try to increase the interest of the girls in the life of the Church unless we know that they will find there not only inspiration but understanding, and ministers with time enough and skill enough to give them at least as much as the teachers who make their school life so important to them.
- religion at the present time seems to be, except in the case of Jews who are, with one or two exceptions, by far the best instructed pupils in this subject that I have met, deplorably out of touch with the needs, aspirations and, indeed, the whole outlook of young people at the present time.
- 50a. I would most strongly urge a trained Theology mistress on a school staff; it has made a great difference here, but more on the side of awakened interest in the subject rather than in organized religion.

It should be realized that many do not agree with the senders of the questions in taking the indifference for granted.

23. I consider that the present indifference is due not so much to lack of interest in the Church as to ignorance of what the Church really teaches, and what she stands for. The great need is for clear dogmatic teaching by the clergy and by teachers.

- 70. I do not think there is an indifference among girls to a call for service in the Church. In fact, I think there is great keenness. But speaking generally, they are not aware what service they can give as a dedication of their lives as distinct from the service given by keen members of the congregation both young and old. Most probably no other service except that which can be given through ordination is clearly present in the minds of boys of equivalent age.
- 108. I should not have said that the present indifference denotes a lack of interest in religions questions or in the Church, but I do find that the girls cannot get the freedom of discussion and the particular attention to their needs in the Church that they get, for instance, in their religious work at school. I say this with great diffidence as it varies from girl to girl and I know there are some girls who get more from their Church than we give them, but I must confess that is the exception rather than the rule.
- religion, but a strong feeling that the Church is out of date; eager to condemn the supposed slack morals of the young; anxious to take the lead in matters of politics and sociology and ignoring worship. This question of worship is very important to them; they consider the Church fails them here.

Some put the matter further back by saying that the parents were alienated in their youth, and the children have never been brought into touch with any religious practice. Quite a number speak of a good proportion either doing voluntary Church work or making it a career.

Question 2.—How far does this indifference result from the scope and status now offered to women in the Church?

GROUI	e"A" That la	ack of status and scope is	nota	
ca	use of indiffere	ence		34
(a)	Headmistress	asked girls their opinion	5	•
(b)	,,	's view of girls' opinion	14	
(c)	,,	own view alone given	13	
(d)	,,	own and view of girls	2	

Headmistresses of this group belong to the denominations as follows:

Anglican	 	25
Free Church	 ·	5
Unknown	 	4

ack of status and scope is a
ce 32
sked girls their opinion 10
s view of girls' opinion 12
wn view alone
wn view and that of girls i
sses the denominations are:—
23
rch 8
ı 6

Note: The expression "view of the girls opinion" is not purely guess-work usually; it is in most cases based on girls comments in leaving interviews and on careers of old girls.

Spoke of financial difficulties in present		
Church work	23	
Spoke of financial difficulties in future if		
orders were open to women	5	
Strongly urge girls to begin with social		
work or at any rate wait till older before		
Church work	25	
Find missionary work preferred as giving		
more scope and status and making		
more demands	26	

In regard to the second question, scope, status and financial considerations are all closely intermingled.

GROUP "A."

- 5. I do not think that the indifference results from the scope of work and status now offered to women in the Church. The causes seem more fundamental: the uncertainties and problems of the world at present, mental confusion, the lowering of ethical standards, the Church's lack of contact with modern life, its lack of leadership and fellowship.
- 9. The majority (of a group of very intelligent girls of 16) thought the present indifference was due to lack of interest in organized religion. They thought the status now offered to women in the Church would not affect the entrance of anyone who was keen enough to become a deaconess. Three-fifths of the group thought that the sex disquali-

fication should be removed, one-fifth did not think women should be admitted to the priesthood, one-fifth reserved their opinion. One girl felt that women did not become deaconesses because they were barred from marriage.

- 95. I do not think the scope of the work and the status of women in the Church comes into the question very much, as the girls rarely take Church work into consideration at all as a career.
- 47. I think they just accept their 'inferior status,' for there is no church boarding school in this district to set the example of girls being servers, and I think the idea is still quite foreign to the ordinary parish priest.
- 96. The emoluments of the positions are not such as make the half desire to be increased. One should not, I know, take up such work for the pay, but, with girls whose parents cannot leave them incomes, the hard fact of a livelihood has to be faced. The change in the status would have very small effect, in my opinion; until there is a real spiritual revival and a return to a practice of prayer, we shall not get girls offering either for the mission field or for the home field.
- 46. There are other careers, such as teaching, medical missionary work, and hospital almoners, which give wide scope to the girl who feels a real call for service in the deepest religious sense, and where ample opportunity would be offered her to exert her influence and at the same time to make herself independent from a financial point of view. Many women nowadays have heavy responsibilities towards their families, and they have to take an equal share with the men in bearing the burden. They cannot, therefore, afford to overlook the financial aspect of possible careers. I do not think that the question of status of women in the Church has anything to do with the lack of response into which you are enquiring.

The most common objection is not so much to the salaries being low, but to the impossibility of saving, and uncertainty of pensions, and high cost of training in most cases. The other objection most frequently raised is the necessity of waiting for some time from 16 or 18 to about 23-25 before a girl would be old enough for work of this kind. A good many, however, say that this would be less of a deterrent if there were a definite career and security after that, as there would be if orders were open to them. This financial argument is used both for and against acceptance of present status.

GROUP "B."

- 1. A majority think it is probably due to the inferior status offered to women, and to the fact that scope (for deaconesses) is so limited.
- 3. As a headmistress of two schools, for a total of thirty-one years, and having always been interested in the religious education of my pupils, taking scripture myself during all this time, I feel that I have had no prospect to offer my girls in connexion with religious work of the Church of England at home, though some have felt called to missionary work abroad. The deaconesses I know appear to have started work when already nearly middle-aged and take second place to the youngest deacon or curate. The work they have to do seems restricted to the women and children, though they are in some cases capable of appealing more widely.
- 6. The general opinion seems to be that the girls would like to play a more active part in the work of the Church and they think that women have a contribution to make to the Church. They think, and I agree with them, that the Church is definitely losing something by the exclusion of women from the ministry. They were of the opinion that it would take some time for this to pierce the indifference of those who did not feel they had any vocation to Church work of any kind, but that eventually it would help considerably.
- 14. Intelligent women will not feel inclined to train for work in the Church so long as its scope, status and remuneration are so restricted. In many parishes women who are superior in character and attainment to their vicars are still fobbed off with the less responsible work of the Church. The remuneration of deaconesses being as low as it is precludes one from advising suitable girls from poor homes to train as deaconesses.
- 21. My own reluctance to press the knowledge of such openings upon girls is based on the fact that I believe that if girls began really to think about the whole matter they would in many cases revolt from the Church altogether, feeling the invidious position which women hold within it. Probably a revolt would be better than the present defections, but one is slow to stir it up deliberately. I consider that it must take so much grace to be a deaconess that very few people relatively would come through the stage of revolt to that splendid estate.
- 66. In my headmistresship of a Church school of over 20 years, I have only had two girls who considered the diaconate; both turned from it because it led no further. It might be inferred that the number would hardly be increased were the full ministry opened to them.

I certainly think the work is considered 'drab.' Also the subordinate position of a deaconess seems more insisted upon than in the case of a deacon. The scanty remuneration is a very definite drawback. It is difficult to save anything, costs of shoes and dress are great in a wearing town parish, and the work demands good food. Girls will preferably turn to community life; the poverty of the religious does not repel in the same way, the onus of ultimate old age is not existent, the obedience of her life vows is of a more honourable and less depressing nature than that required of the deaconess to her vicar.

Social service and welfare work attract girls strongly at the present time. But such work within the fold of the Church is so badly remunerated as to be possible only to those with sufficient private means. Two of my girls quite recently were forbidden it on this ground by their fathers, both earnest priests of the Church of England, hard at work

in huge parishes.

One point connected with this seems to be thought of in rather an ultra-idealistic way. Several Headmistresses speak of the vocation of Church work, and still more of ordination, as so high that financial questions should not be considered at all. For instance, one quotes from a Sixth form, "You don't mean that you think we might imagine a vocation because there was a chance of being a bishop?" "It seemed to them a cynical suggestion," was her comment. But others dwell emphatically upon the necessity for the girls to look ahead when parents, or the education of younger brothers and sisters, often depend upon their earnings. Others speak of the difficulties of their getting training in the face of the parents' indifference, or "the pathetic desire, especially of the fathers, for safe jobs for their girls, with pensions, even if the work is uncongenial." They tend to take up other work directly they leave school, and it is often an impossibility to take another course of training later and sometimes the desire for it disappears.

On the other hand, a considerable number do not think girls can or ought to decide on such work on leaving school, and that 20 to 30 is the right age. Most of these say that social work is a natural outlet for those whose call to Church work has not yet developed. The above-mentioned difficulties about training come in

again here.

Question 3.—What change, if any, would there be in the attitude of the girls if ordination to the Historic Ministry of the Church were open to them?

GROUP "A" approve of Ordination and think	it
would make a difference	54
(a) Have asked the girls specifically	2
(b) Head's opinion of girls' attitude	8
(c) Head disapproves but thinks the girls	
would not	2
(d) Head's own opinion only	2
Anglican 30	
Free Church (including	
two Quakers) 11	
Unknown 13	

Notes: One thinks that the girls would vote for equality, but their knowledge of difficulties to be considered (hindrances to reunion, etc.) makes their opinion of little value. Another thought that they would be much divided, and both sides feel strongly (she herself would most reluctantly join the Roman Communion). Several said that only some approved, or in one case 70% of the girls; one said "the best" of her Sixth; one Sixth was unanimous.

GROUP "B" disapprove, 20; or accept present	
position as astablished thing	37
(a) Have asked girls specifically 7	31
(b) Heads' opinion of girls' attitude 16	
(c) Heads' own views 14	
Anglican 26	
Free Church 7	
Unknown 5	
Church of Ireland I	

Notes: One is emphatic, three had a majority, one a small minority under (a). Under (b) some thought that they would not brave opposition as well as financial difficulties. Under (c) one did not go so far as ordination, but thought some extension of women's work as an Order in the Church was desirable.

GROUP "C"	did not answer gave doubtful answers		31 \ 48
	Anglican	23	
	D. 01 1	19	100.
	Uncertain	6	

Notes: Of these last some said it would make a difference if status were improved. Others were unable to decide what the girls would think.

To come to the last question, the following quotations illustrate the attitude of those who think that the opening of full orders to women would make a difference in their attitude to the Church.

GROUP "A."

- 2. The girls would not, for instance, consider the work of a deaconess, but it would make a tremendous difference if ordination were open to them. They feel it is reflexion on the Church that there is inequality of status between men and women.
- Were it possible for a young woman to contemplate ordination to the full historic ministry of the Church, I think many would desire this as their vocation, and this acceptance would, I think, react in a very desirable way on the minds of their contemporaries engaged in other ways.
- There could not fail to be an overwhelming change in the attitude of the girls if they felt that their own life work might be spent in the real work of the Church itself, not just in the side issues of missioner or lay helper. These openings by their very nature attract all the same types as would the actual Ministry.
- 72. I myself believe that, if ordination were open to women, there would be many who would wish to take advantage of it; however, there would probably be some prejudice to be overcome. Very few girls here could afford to pay for the cost of training.
- 75. There would be a change in the attitude of girls if ordination were open to them. They would feel a really responsible part of the Church and that the Church considered them significant.
- 85. The Upper V contended that girls were not indifferent to organized religion, but that more would welcome taking a share in the Church services as lay-readers than as full ministers, because, until full ministry became common,

only the most exceptional girls would feel called to pioneer. They were unanimous in feeling that the full ministry should be open to women.

They would understand the women of the church better than a man does, and the women would show a greater interest in the work of the Church if led by one of their own sex.

It would be much better if women and men were on the same level in the Church. More girls would become missionaries and more interest would be taken in church affairs.

It has been difficult to distinguish between the answers given against the opening of orders to women. Some disapproved of the suggestion altogether; others thought it would make no difference because the girls have never thought of it for themselves; others because of the financial difficulties mentioned above. The notes appended to the table are an attempt to indicate those reasons where definite classification was not possible.

GROUP "B."

- 10. I do not think many of the girls here would be greatly interested in the idea of ordination being opened to women. From the point of view of their careers, it would not be of much use, for they would probably complain that the training would be too long, and expensive, and doubtless there would be less aid by grant than in the case of teaching.
- 40. I have personally come across no desire on the part of women and girls to enter the ministry of the Church. The few inspired women like Miss Royden can probably do better work outside.
- 41. There are also many capable devoted women giving parttime and extra help in parish work who would willingly give full-time work if sure of the means of livelihood.

Where the Girl Guide movement in connexion with a church is worked really well, it is generally found to be in the hands of a business woman or elementary school teacher. Such an one, if she could enter a kind of Fourth Order in the ministry, outside chancel and pulpit, but with honour and a competency, would be invaluable in such work as instruction to young mothers in teaching the elements of the faith, organization of Sunday Schools, Girl Guide movements, elementary pre-confirmation classes, even boys' clubs, etc.

I should like to see such voluntary workers persuaded to take special training to become members of this Fourth Order rather than inexperienced persons trained academically for it. I think there would be a response from excellent young women.

- 59. If the historic orders were open to women, I think there would be a vast number of 'conversions' to Rome and a diminution of the numbers attending church.
- 93. Those anxious to serve the Church never seem 'put off' by the inability to take orders, they realize that for the willing there is ample scope but they are not always encouraged by the clergy. To many, a ministry of women is undesirable as a bar to union with the other branches of the Catholic Church and they can also see practical difficulties. A very large proportion of our old girls are doing work for the Church at home and overseas.
- 98. Of course the question of ordination has never come up at all, because no schoolgirl has ever looked upon it as a possible thing for herself.
- 50. I do not think they have even considered the matter as likely to happen in their time; at least, when we have discussed it, their approach has been purely academic.
- 45. As far as my experience goes, girls do not seem to be interested in holding office in the Ministry. This is probably because the idea never enters their heads in view of the impossibility at the moment.

105. Men have done this work so long that there may be some prejudice against women.

I do not think a great deal of difference would be made if women were able to be ordained. A small minority would doubtless enter the ministry, but the majority would remain unaffected. In the other professions which are now open to women the number of those who succeed are very small.

One or two points mentioned with less direct bearing on the question may be noted here. Several speak strongly of the need and value of specialist mistresses in scripture, and those schools which have them do not complain of lack of interest at least in their lessons. One or two do not seem to have a very adequate idea of the scope that this offers, for they speak of its being a very narrow field of service. No one who has had experience of this work even in undenominational schools (perhaps even less in them) would agree; but the

point is that this is not Church work in its generally

accepted sense.

Perhaps this is not the place to make suggestions, but it is probable that women of the Church of England who are engaged in teaching Christianity, whether in Church or in undenominational schools, would like to be considered as doing Church work and as members of a teaching order in the Church. Has not the Church tended to ignore the other divisions of work which St. Paul differentiated when he spoke of "Some apostles, some prophets, some teachers, helps and governments"? Are not they all properly orders in the Church? This applies also to much social work done in the spirit of Christ, but necessarily not on a denominational basis to-day.

This suggestions does not ignore the fact that there are Anglican guilds of teachers stressing the religious side of teachers' work, such as the St. Peter's Guild, and the Guild of the Good Shepherd, but these are merely voluntary associations, as is the Guild of Social Workers. The difficulties due to the divided state of the Church of Christ and the fact that these workers are not in the employ of the Church are obvious. Yet clergy who teach "secular" subjects in Public Schools are nevertheless regarded as working for their Church.

It is hoped that these questions will be discussed in other schools and by groups of young people, and that their findings, whether sympathetic or otherwise to the viewpoint of the Group, will be forwarded to the Secretary, Miss Evelyn Hippisley, S.Th., 26, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, London, S.W.I.

GROUP LITERATURE.

MEMORANDUM ON WOMEN AND THE PRIESTHOOD, presented to the Lambeth Conference of 1930.

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A Brief Account of the Oxford Conference, 1933. Report of the Conference at Birmingham, September, 1936.

Women Deacons in the Early Church, by the Rev. Canon C. H. Norton.

Women and the Priesthood, by the Rev. Canon C. H. Norton.

Women's Work for the Church, by Evelyn W. Hippisley. 1939.

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