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Among the Monotheistic
Religions

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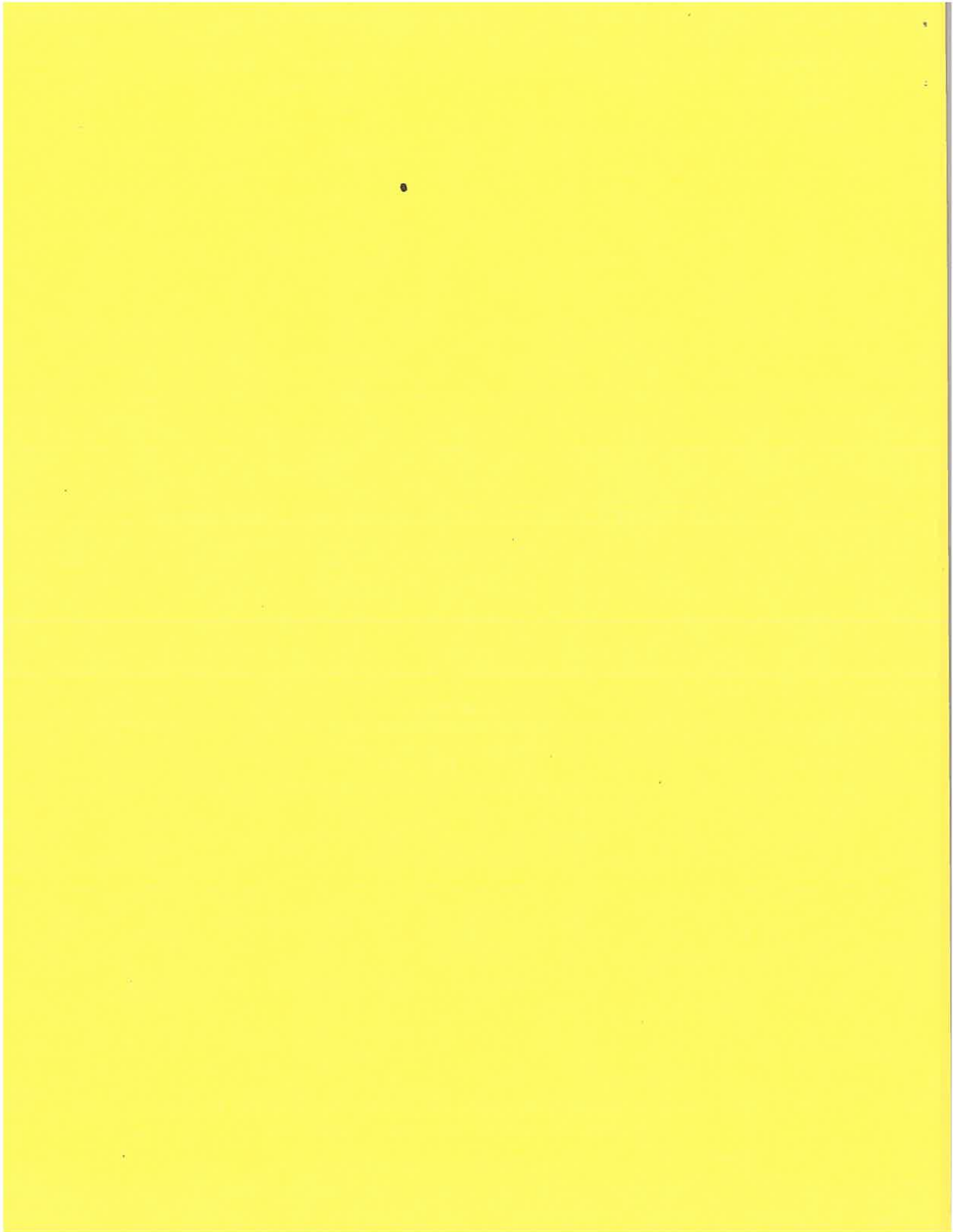
NOTES TOWARD A DISCUSSION ON WOMEN AND CHRISTIANITY

by

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WOMEN AND CHRISTIANITY

Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking upon his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.¹

1. Perhaps the most important point to make about women and Christianity is that there would seem to be no single interpretation of any one point regarding the nature of women, their proper relationship to men, or their role in either society or the Church. There are no specific rules such as those to be found in orthodox Judaism or Islam - which is not, of course, to say that there are not rules within specific Christian traditions. But, not only are there differences between the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, there are differences within these traditions and, indeed, differences over time within any particular religious denomination. Indeed, there are numerous differences to be found within most of the Christian religions, and, in order to illuminate some of the different ways in which women are perceived within one particular tradition at one particular time, I shall spend some time in describing some of the interpretations that the Christian tradition 'allows' with respect to one particular, contemporary issue: the ordination of women priests within the Church of England. The reason for my doing this is not so much because the issue is, in itself, of much interest (although it undoubtedly is of some), but because it serves to allow us to bring some order to what could be a very amorphous subject when approached without any focus. If, in other words, I can indicate to you something of the range of positions to be found in such a narrow area, it might help to substantiate my main contention: that almost anything can go in Christianity so far as an understanding of women and their role is concerned.

But, before moving to the particular debate, let me make some generalisations and briefly indicate some other areas in which we could discuss further the subject of women and Christianity.

2. The fact that Christianity allows a number of different interpretations concerning women means that the social culture and structure of any society can draw on a vast range of interpretations of Christianity to justify its vision of women. In other words, it is not that Christianity has nothing to say about women; it has quite a lot to say, but there is the possibility of selecting and/or interpreting various parts of the New (and Old) Testament, and appealing to a range of traditions that have arisen during the centuries.

3. While modern, feminist theologians have found much to

support their contentions that women can and should enjoy an equal standing with men if one reads the Scriptures correctly (see 4 below), it is undoubtedly true that women in Christian cultures have almost always found themselves regarded as inferior to men - even when the official statement is that they are equal but different. The major exception to this might appear to lie in the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the Roman Catholic tradition. This, however, has been a phenomenon that has described the perfect woman as both a virgin and a mother - an ideal that is, of course, impossible for any actual woman to emulate.

The authorised prayer book of the Second Vatican Council of 1964 includes a section called "We promise to imitate her" and recommends a modern prayer: "Most blessed Virgin Mary... your life of faith and love and perfect unity with Christ was planned by God to show us clearly what our lives should be... You are the outstanding model of motherhood and virginity"²
But, of course:

... every facet of the Virgin[has] been systematically developed to diminish, not increase, her likeness to the female condition. Her freedom from sex, painful delivery, age, death, and all sin [exalts] her *ipso facto* above ordinary women and [shows] them up as inferior.³

Warner argues that, unlike the gods of classical mythology, the Catholic Church does not admit sins or even faults in its God, nor even in his mother. In fulfilling the psychological function of myth, in which aspects of the human mind are represented through stories in which deities or mythological figures suffer or triumph in dramas of timeless application, the image of human error is relegated to lesser ranks - the Peter who denied, the Thomas who doubted. So far as women are concerned:

The Virgin Mary could not meet this condition, for in her absolute purity and her exemption from the common lot she could not sin. Another figure consequently developed to fulfil this important lacuna, that of St. Mary Magdalene, who, together with the Virgin Mary, typifies Christian society's attitudes to women and sex. Both females are perceived in sexual terms: Mary as a virgin, and Mary Magdalene as a whore - until her repentance. The Magdalene, like Eve, was brought into existence by the powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation of the flesh. For this reason she became a prominent and beloved

saint.⁴

And then, of course, there is Eve the temptress, Eve the cause of the Fall, Eve the woman who seduced the man and was responsible for all the ills of the earth - had it not been for Eve....

.... she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. [Genesis 3:6]

Unto the Woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. [Genesis 3:16]

4. From a feminist perspective:

The Bible has been & is used as a weapon against

(a) Christian women and (b) all women because it still informs even 'secularised' societies and cultures i.e the Bible is not simply religious, but also a political book. But the Bible is also a resource for courage hope and commitment in the struggle. Feminist hermeneutics are not simply religious, but also have a political task.

Bible & tradition (i) cannot be trusted or accepted simply as divine revelation, and (ii) must be critically evaluated as patriarchal articulations.

Biblical texts are not the word of God, but the words of men.

They legitimate patriarchal power and oppression

God is rendered male

Ultimate reality determined in male terms⁵

Some feminists believe that it is necessary to abandon the Bible

Others argue that it is necessary to reclaim the Bible

cf. The Woman's Bible (Elizabeth Cady Stanton) and the Inclusive Language Lectionary against which there was a strong reaction

(eg James J. Kilpatrick in the Washington Post:

"It is probably a waste of time, energy, and indignation to denounce the latest efforts to castrate the Holy Bible, but vandalism of this magnitude ought not to go unremarked]⁶

The National Council of Churches is overseeing a non-sexist revision of the Revised Standard Version of the bible, the Catholic Biblical Association is revising the Catholic lectionary and New American Bible, and American Bishops have voted to change phrases in the Mass which refer exclusively to men.⁷

4. Although there are some women (usually mystics) who have made a significant contribution to Christian thought (Julian of Norwich⁸ is one obvious example, Teresa of Avila⁹ is another), it is no accident that the general term used to refer to

important Christian writers between the end of the 1st century (when the NT was almost, if not quite, completed) up to the 13th cent. is Patristics, and since that time, it is only in very recent years that female theologians have been anything but a somewhat unusual exception to the male monopoly.

5. So far as saints are concerned, however, women have been more successful. Female saints tend to have been extremely diverse in their accomplishments - consider, for example, Joan of Arc [1412-31], Teresa of Liseaux¹⁰ and the 4th c. Catherine of Alexandria).¹¹

6. Although important in the Middle Ages, nunneries were limited in number (to about 130 between 1250 and 1540, with perhaps 3,500 nuns in England about 1350, decreasing to about 1,900 in 1534.¹² The nunneries provided the possibility of a career for "girls of gentle birth for whom the only alternative was marriage."¹³ Poor girls from the lower classes did not become nuns because, according to Eileen Power, the families of these classes needed no special outlets for their women - working class women worked in agriculture and industry, and the families of peasants and artisans could not afford the dowry needed to enter a nunnery.

7. There are, by now, quite a lot of data about the differences between men and women so far as church attendance and participation are concerned. What is less clear as the reasons for these differences - although there is a wealth of speculation on the subject. Let me, however, provide a few tables to indicate the position with respect to Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States.

TABLE 114

Sex differences in church membership

		Male %	Female %	Sex ratio
Gorer (1955)	British adults	75	75	1.00
BIPG (1950)	British adults	89	94	1.05
Census of Religious Bodies (1936)	US population	20.13m	25.65m	1.32

Sex differences in church attendance

		Male %	Female %	Sex ratio
BIPG (1948)	Brit adults (weekly)	12	18	1.50
Odham (1947)	" " (3 monthly)	44	55	1.25
Gallup Poll (1972)	US adults	45	55	1.22

Sex differences in reported daily private prayer

Gorer (1955)	English adults	31	58	1.87
Social Surveys (1964)	Adults in ITV area (UK)	33	53	1.56
Allport et al (1948)	Harvard & Radcliffe Students	22	35	1.59
Ross (1950)	YMCA members (US)	37.8	64.2	1.70

Sex differences in religious beliefsBelief in God

Social Surveys (1964)	Brit adults (personal God)	30	45	1.50
	Brit adults (spirit or life force)	33	33	1.00
Gallup Poll (1968)	USA adults	96	98	1.02

Belief in an after-life

Odham (1947)	English adults	39	56	1.44
Gallup Poll (1960)	US adults	68	78	1.15

Belief Jesus was the son of God

Social Surveys (1964)	Brit adults	46	71	1.54
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Sex differences in mystical experiences

Back & Bourque (1970)	US adults	29.5	35.4	1.20
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Table 2¹⁵The Ratio of women to men in the American denominations

Census (1936)	Eastern Orthodox	0.75-0.99
	Roman Catholics	1.09
	Lutherans	1.04-1.23
	Mennonites	1.14-1.16
	Friends	1.25
	Episcopalians	1.37
	Presbyterians	1.34-1.44
	Unitarians	1.40
	Methodists	1.33-1.47
	Baptists	1.35-1.50
	Congregationalists	1.55
	Negro Baptists	1.55
	Negro Methodists	1.64-1.71
	Assembly of God	1.71
	Adventists	1.52-2.00
	Church of the Nazarene	1.75
	Pentecostalists	1.71-2.09
	Christian Scientists	3.19

Sex differences for British denominations for reported weekly attendance

Jones (1934)	Church of England	1.63
	Roman Catholic	1.19
	Nonconformist	1.48

Table 3¹⁶UK MissionariesLevels of Commitment 1982

	<u>Protestant Missionaries</u>			<u>R C Missionaries</u>		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Short-term	721	901	1,622	170	221	391
Career	1,441	2,103	3,544	474	511	985
Sub-total	2,162	3,004	5,116	644	732	1,376
Associates	307	125	432	24	31	55
Total	2,469	3,129	5,598	668	763	1,431

Proportions of men

	<u>Protestant Missionaries</u>			<u>R C Missionaries</u>	
	1976	1980	1982	1982	
	%	%	%	%	
Number abroad	43	44	41	51	
On leave	35	37	35	3	
Secondments	49	46	46	-	
UK executive staff	65	72	67	42	
UK office staff	31	28	32	95	
Associates	30	46	71	44	
Retired personnel	29	28	28	32	
Overall proportion	40	40	40	45	

Table 4¹⁷

Age group	<u>Total English population</u>			<u>All Church attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	11	10	21	13	13	26
15-19	4	4	8	4	5	9
20-29	7	7	14	5	6	11
30-44	10	9	19	7	9	16
45-64	11	12	23	9	11	20
65 or over	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>18</u>
ALL ages	49	51	100	45	55	100

Age group	<u>Episcopal Church Attenders</u>			<u>Methodist attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	14	13	27	14	14	28
15-19	4	5	9	2	3	5
20-29	4	6	10	2	3	5
30-44	7	10	17	5	7	12
45-64	9	9	18	8	17	25
65 or over	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>25</u>
ALL ages	45	55	100	40	60	100

Age group	<u>Baptist attenders</u>			<u>URC/Congregational attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	14	16	30	15	12	27
15-19	3	5	8	2	3	5
20-29	5	4	9	3	4	7
30-44	7	9	16	6	8	14
45-64	7	12	19	9	12	21
65 or over	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>26</u>
ALL ages	43	57	100	43	57	100

Age group	<u>Independent attenders</u>			<u>African/W.I. church attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	16	15	31	19	19	38
15-19	4	5	9	4	8	12
20-29	7	6	13	4	6	10
30-44	8	9	17	7	11	18
45-64	6	8	14	6	11	17
65 or over	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
ALL ages	47	53	100	41	59	100

Table 4 cont.

Age group	<u>Pentecostal/Holiness attenders</u>			<u>Other Protestant attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	15	14	29	11	14	25
15-19	5	6	11	4	5	9
20-29	6	7	13	5	6	11
30-44	8	9	17	7	9	16
45-64	7	9	16	9	11	20
65 or over	<u>5</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>19</u>
ALL ages	46	54	100	44	56	100

Age group	<u>Roman Catholic attenders</u>			<u>Orthodox attenders</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under 15	12	12	24	14	13	27
15-19	5	7	12	5	7	12
20-29	5	7	12	3	3	6
30-44	9	10	19	5	8	13
45-64	9	11	20	9	14	23
65 or over	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>19</u>
ALL ages	46	54	100	45	55	100

It is, incidentally, interesting to note that an analysis of the recent "European Value Study" with respect to (at least) Britain and Belgium shows that sex *per se* did not seem to affect the religious practices, definitions, beliefs, attitudes and morals. Only a combined index of age and domestic involvement (whether women were part of the labour force). Three social categories emerged:

- (a) most involved in religion: middle-aged and older housewives
- (b) intermediate: middle-aged and older men; middle-aged and older employed women and the younger housewives
- (c) least involved in religion: younger men and younger employed women.¹⁸

Some explanations that have been offered to explain sex differences:¹⁷

It is, perhaps, important to note that these explanations have been offered from within a Christian culture.

1. The function of religion is to relieve guilt. Women have more guilt feelings than men. Therefore, women are more religious than men. This also explains the rise in proportion of women as one moves from Catholicism to the more extreme forms of Protestantism with their emphasis on sin and salvation.
2. If God is a projected father figure (Freud), and if children prefer opposite-sex parent, girls should be more interested in a deity presented as a fatherly male. Catholicism, offering also a mother-figure should be more attractive than Protestantism to men.
3. Physiologically, females are said to be less aggressive, more fearful, more submissive, more passive, more anxious, more dependent, have more worries and more distress - characteristics that can be related to 'fear and trembling' in the experience of the religious person.
4. During socialisation, most cultures put an emphasis on training girls for nurturance, obedience and responsibility; boys are trained in self-reliance and independence and are less expressive emotionally.
5. Women score higher in studies of conformity, suggestibility and persuasibility.
6. Women are more deprived than men and religion acts as a compensator. Women in their fantasy stories show a movement from negative to positive emotions and experiences (men show the opposite pattern) which, it is claimed, agrees with seeing women's religiosity as a reaction to relative deprivation. Areas of deprivation include sex and it is claimed that the erotic nature of religious ecstasy among women and the connection between religion and preoccupation with sexual taboos lend support to this view.

The Ordination of Women Priests

Unlike North Americans, the British rarely discuss their religious beliefs in public. It just is not considered very good taste. In recent years, however, there have been several occurrences that have thrown the Church of England onto the front page of the newspapers and led to heated discussions far beyond the confines of ecclesiastical circles. The issue that has received most attention has been that concerning the ordination of women priests. The debate has brought into the open so many assumptions about women and their place in Christianity that it seems to be a fertile example at which we might look a bit more closely as an exercise in understanding women in Christianity more generally.

Women officials in Christian Churches are by no means unknown, but it is only comparatively recently that women have been ordained to the ministry. As the matter stands at the moment, neither the Orthodox nor the Roman Catholic Church have women priests, but most of the Protestant churches have, not many, but a growing number of ordained Ministers who are officially on an equal footing with male ministers.

[As a sociologist, I am particularly interested in the scramble of social and theological arguments that are to be found in assumptions about gender and gender roles within any particular tradition. It might, in parenthesis, be worth remarking that an interesting comparative analysis of cultures and sub-cultures with respect to the position of women in their respective priesthoods might be undertaken to test the hypothesis that those groups that are more concerned to protect social boundaries, and who are more ritual in their forms of worship will be more likely to have women priests than are groups which are concerned with protecting social boundaries and enjoy more "effervescent" forms of worship.]²⁰

The United Kingdom has two Established churches: the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland, which has women priests, and the (Anglican) Church of England, which has not - although there are now several women priests in the Anglican community in other parts of the world, including the United States. When the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1975, the Church of England was exempted from its provisions. Most of the Nonconformist Churches have introduced ordination for women during the present century.

A decision in favour of the principle of women priests was

passed by the Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, twelve years ago. The earliest that this could be implemented would be 1992. The debate continues as how best to implement the decision, however, when a considerable proportion of the clergy, laity and bishops are firmly against the move - perhaps one third of the clergy and one quarter of the laity. In recent years, the anti-women priests lobby has been led by the Bishop of London, the Right Reverend Dr Graham Leonard, who has threatened to split the Church down the middle - or, more cautiously now, to lead a sizeable number of members out of the Church into either the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox Churches (a suggestion not entirely welcomed by these churches because of the negative, rather than positive reasons for which they would seem to be attractive to the Bishop and his followers).²¹

Until 27 February 1987, the furthest that women could proceed in the Church of England hierarchy was to become a deaconess. (The first female principal of a Church of England theological college, St John's of the University of Durham, was recently appointed.) Now, however, the bishops in the diocese of Canterbury and York are ordaining their deaconesses to become deacons - the final stage before priesthood for men. These new female deacons can wear a dog-collar (rather than just a holy cross), they can conduct weddings (as deaconesses they were able to take funerals and to baptise) and they are now classified as clerics in Holy Orders (rather than laity) but they may not proceed to become priests, and only priests may give bless the bread as Jesus did before his crucifixion in the manner celebrated in the Eucharist.

The Bishops' Report, which suggests interim arrangements whereby congregations who do not want women priests need not have them and Bishops who conscientiously object to their ordination need not ordain them or have them functioning in their diocese, states, what is agreed by both sides in the debate, that "This issue raises the nature of the Church and the Church's salvation of humanity and the Nature and Being of God".²² On 26th February the Report was discussed in the General Synod, the possibility of a split in the Church of England, rather than the argument for or against the ordination of women, dominating the debate. At the end of the day, there was a vote of 317 to 145 in favour of the ordination of women priests. However, although this represents an overall majority of two thirds, there was less than a two thirds majority in the House of Clergy, and, before the change can be finally passed, there will have to be a two thirds majority in each of the three

Houses of the General Synod (the Houses of the Bishops, Clergy and Laity),²³ as well as the consent of Parliament.

By no means all the present deaconesses wish to become priests, and by no means all of those who do wish to do so are feminists; many are avowedly anti-feminist - they believe that God has called them to serve Him and to share the good news of Jesus Christ; they believe that they ought to be allowed to follow God's call - and not be stopped by the Church.

Not all women are in favour of women priests - indeed, many of the strongest opponents are women.

The battle takes place on a number of different fronts: theological; sociological; feminist; anti-feminist and so on. Although it is not always easy to sort out the one from the other, I shall try to indicate the variety by placing some of the arguments under different headings.

Democracy:

Although both sides tend to deny that they believe that truth is a question of a statistical majority, those in favour of women priests point to the fact that the majority of the Church of England's members (at least in so far as they are represented in the General Synod), are in favour of the ordination of women, while those against the change point out that the majority of members of the One Holy Apostolic Church, of which the Church of England is only a small part, are against the change. Dr Leonard argues that if the Church of England decides by itself to ordain women priests, it will no longer be able to claim to be part of the One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. [There are, however, those who are in the Roman Catholic Church (including not a few of its priests), who are in favour of their eventually being women priests ordained in that institution.]²⁴

History:

Throughout history, there have only been male priests (in the Universal Apostolic Church). The Archbishop of Canterbury has said, however, that if the Church listened only to tradition it would end up speaking only to itself.²⁵

Sociological:

It has been argued that women's traditional labour experience, practical considerations (such as difficulty in gaining the requisite numbers of male ordinands - although the number applying for the priesthood has risen in recent

years), the falling status of priests in contemporary Britain, low pay, little competition, the fact that religious institutions are, on the whole, peripheral to the political spectrum would seem to argue for the inclusion of women. The priest's role is, in other words, of little importance for the secular society; except, perhaps, for performing a 'caring' role - which is acceptable for (if not always to) women.

Symbolism:

One has to have "a theological understanding of what the priest presiding at the Eucharist means..... Nobody in this androgenous society understands the importance of the masculine/feminine principle. By presiding at the Eucharist, [the priest] is standing in the place of Christ - the masculine role of Christ as the head of his Church, and the Church fulfilling the feminine role"²⁶

Creation:

"The difference between the sexes is fundamentally written into our creation, which we believe was created by God. One can believe that men and women are identical or complementary - I (Graham Leonard) cannot bear a child - God created men and women to be different, not interchangeable - women have a place in the Christian ministry, (they are good at giving spiritual advice) but not interchangeable as priests."

Relativism:

"Sometimes societies discover moral truths which may have been forgotten or obscured for many, many centuries. I think one of the truths that has been rediscovered relates to the dignity of women, to the contribution they have to make to the general life of society, to their essential equality, as human beings before God, with men".²⁷

"If Christ in Israel, between AD30 and 40 had appointed women priests, the infant Church would have been sneered out of existence, because men then thought women were inferior beings....[If we now] believe that men and women are all equal before God...., there are no valid reasons whatsoever against women priests."²⁸

On the other hand, there are those who argue that the early Church allowed women greater religious functioning, but that "men of the Church (not God) and society repeatedly put feminine authority to question".²⁹

On the other side, we find those who attack the idea that just because feminism has taken hold of contemporary society as a modern 'fad', there is no reason why the Church should abandon its allegiance to time-honoured, absolute truths.

"We don't adapt the gospel of Christ just because of

society's present standards".³⁰

This position is not necessarily questioned by the advocates of the ordination of women priests.

Church Structure:

Changing the structure of the Church is seen as a further threat by opponents. Dr Leonard points out that the Church of England did not invent the ministry, but inherited it from the undivided Church Universal. Dr Runcie has, however, pointed out that there is not going to be the creation of a new species of priestesses, merely that the ministry of Christ, having been open to only half the population, will become open to the other half.³¹

Split in the Church:

One of the reasons put forward why the Archbishop of Canterbury voted against implementing the ordination of women in 1977 was that he was desperately trying to hold the Church together. Dr Leonard had been suggesting that a split would probably occur, and several other opponents have talked of the possibility or even probability that there would result two separate Churches - one of which (the other side's) one being called a sect. It was in an attempt to forestall such a happening that the Bishops' Report was prepared.

Loss of Church of England membership:

Those for the ordination of women:

Some women, forbidden to administer the central sacrament of their faith have devised their own female forms of worship and have given up taking communion.³² Several Christian women have left the Church of England altogether and gone to other Churches (frequently the Society of Friends), and others are threatening to leave.

In this camp the argument is that the Church of England is dragging its feet and if a mass exodus of the disaffected is not to take place, change ought to be brought about more quickly.

Those against the ordination of women:

An unknown number (currently estimated as some tens of thousands) are threatening to leave the Church of England if women are ordained.

Like some of those who have felt that they had to leave, some of those opposing the proposals are using the language of persecution. "If the Church of England decides to throw away all its history and all it's ever believed in, we would be driven out of the Church".³³

Here one hears the argument that the Church of

England is trying to push the changes through too quickly, before they have been properly thought through.

On both sides:

Others (such as Margaret Hewett of "Women Against the ordination of women") say that they will stay around in order to make as much fuss as possible.

Enrichment vs. impoverishment of the Priesthood:

One of the main arguments of those in favour of the ordination of women is that it is only through their ordination that the Church can hope to have a 'whole' priesthood.³⁴ "In so far as the priesthood represents the Christ in relation to his people, it lacks a degree of fullness if it is simply confined to men."³⁵

Miraculous element of the Eucharist:

On the other hand, there are those who believe that "unless someone is validly ordained a priest, then the consecration wouldn't 'take', so the bread and wine would not really be the body and blood of Christ".³⁶

The Incarnation:

While the Bishop of London argues that he believes that it was no accident that God was incarnate as a male person, and that if this did not have a fundamental significance, should we not have had a second incarnation? the Bishop of Manchester responds that one could equally well argue that as Jesus was a Jew, priests should be only of the Jewish race.

Biblical quotations:

Although The Bishop of London objects strongly that the proposed changes are not proved anywhere in the Scriptures, proponents of the ordination of women point to several parts of the Bible for support. These include:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.³⁷

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.³⁸

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.³⁹

There came unto him a women having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.⁴⁰

On the other side, we can read:

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

Let the women learn in silence with all subjection.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

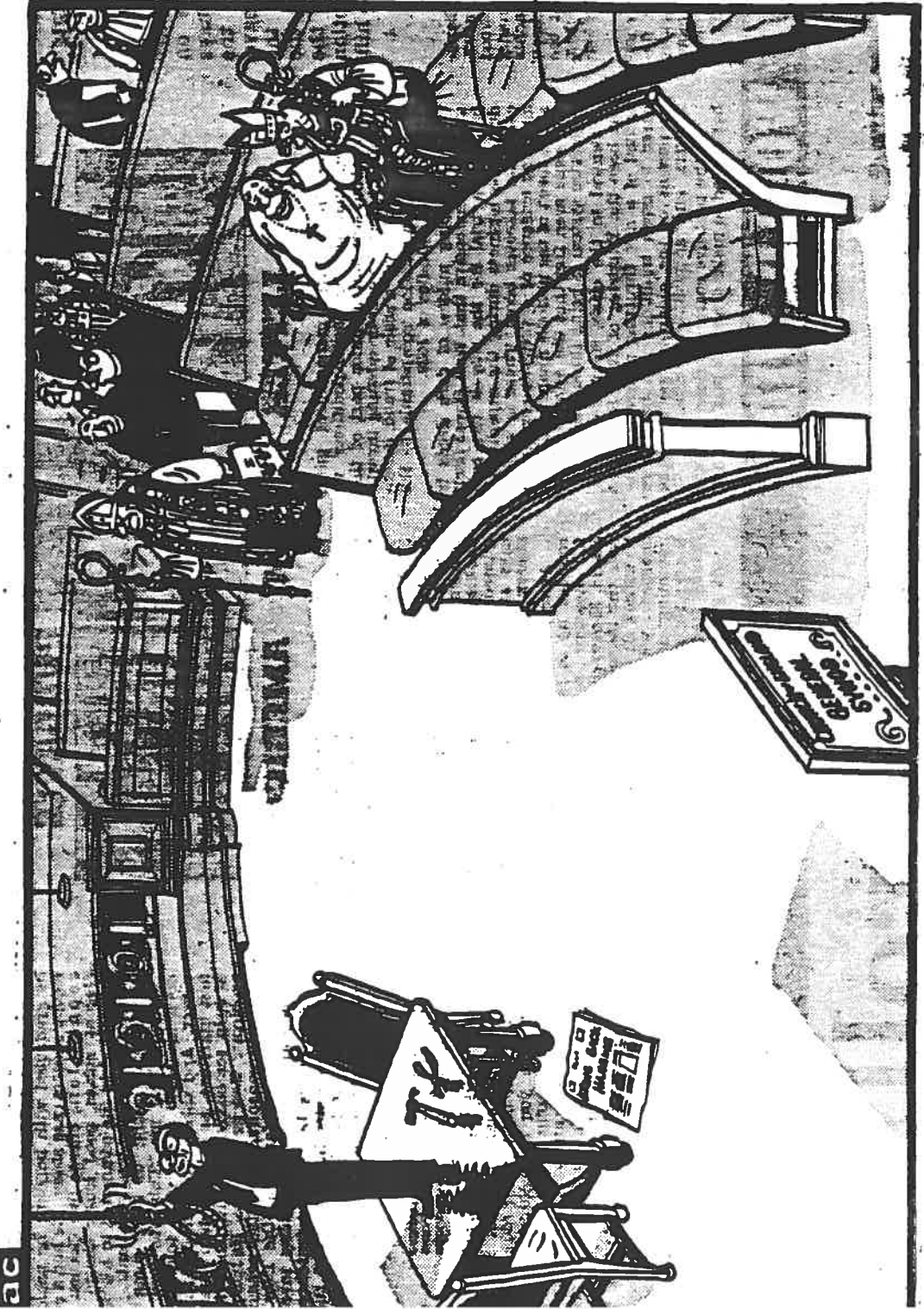
And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.⁴¹

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.⁴²

One also finds the parable of the talents frequently quoted by those who see women having to bury their talents.⁴³

Ich kann nicht anders:⁴⁴

While the Bishop of London and many others believe that, despite the fact that they would much rather spend their time on other matters, God is calling them to resist the ordination of women, the Bishop of Manchester declares that the Church of England is achieving change under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God; a deaconess says that her experience has led her to see that women's ministry is God-given and that she cannot stand and say that God is wrong. It is, she says, frustrating if you feel that God has given you a ministry and the Church says that you cannot fully exercise it.⁴⁵



Are you sure we can take Mr Gummer's word they'll bring it back for anyone voting for women priests?

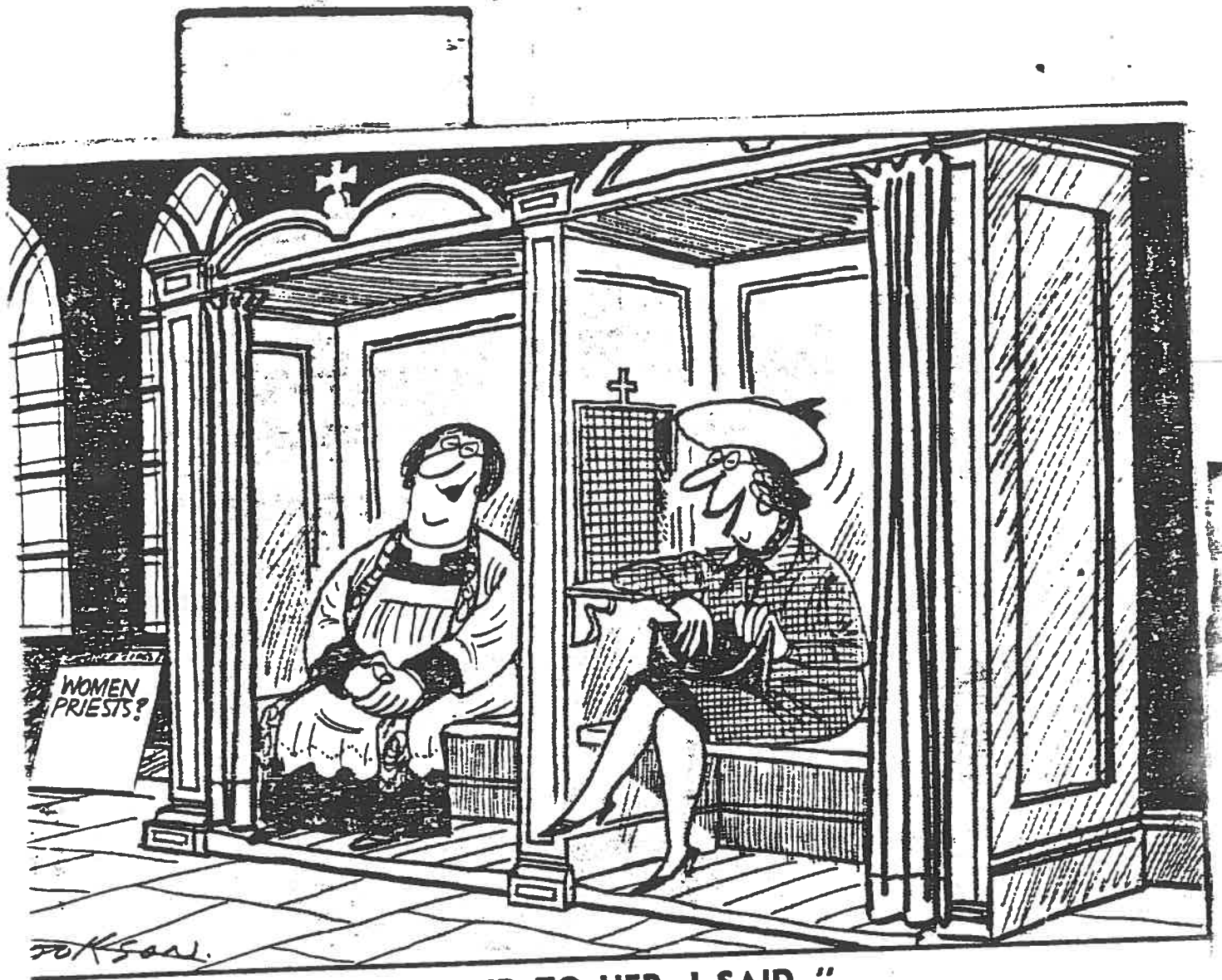
Hanging vote to include drug pushers

By GORDON GAZIE
Political Editor

WESTMINSTER is bracing itself for another emotional debate about restoration of the death penalty.

This time its advocates will be seeking to widen the net to include drug pushers as well as terrorists and the murderers of police and prison officers.

The pressure for the return of capital punishment is being led by 175 Tories who see the chance of a vote as a vital test of MPs' responsiveness to the majority of voters, who in successive opinion polls have recorded overwhelming support for the death penalty.



"..SO I SAID TO HER, I SAID.."

Church split could involve the Queen

By GORDON GREIG, Political Editor
THE deepest schism since the Reformation is threatening to engulf the Church of England votes this week on priests.

A crucial meeting of the Synod — the Anglican 'parliament' of bishops, clergy and laity — on Thursday was given advance warning yesterday of a mass exodus if a proposal calling for legislation allowing women's ordination is approved.

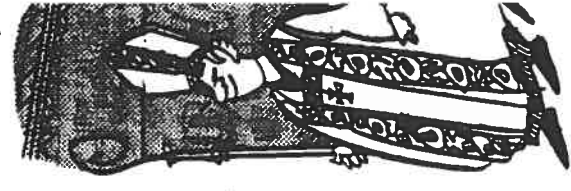
The Bishop of London Dr Graham Leonard, made it clear he will go. He said: 'I will regard myself free to explore other paths.'

Force

So too did Farm Minister and ex-Tory chairman John Selwyn Gummer, a leading lay member of the Synod. He predicted: 'This is the issue which will force me out — and not just me but thousands of priests and tens of thousands of laity.'

The issue of giving women equal rights to administer the sacraments has convulsed the Church. Some see the issue as fundamental to the very survival of the Church of England as a force to be reckoned with.

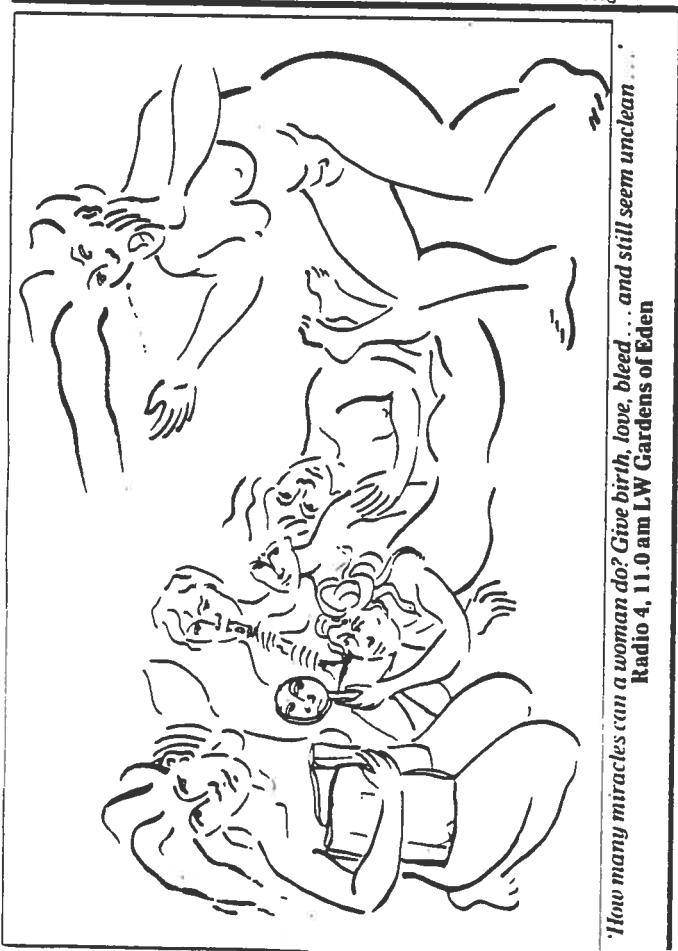
Traditionalists like the Bishop of London and Mr Gummer claim that to have full women priests would mean rewriting the Prayer Book. The Anglican Church



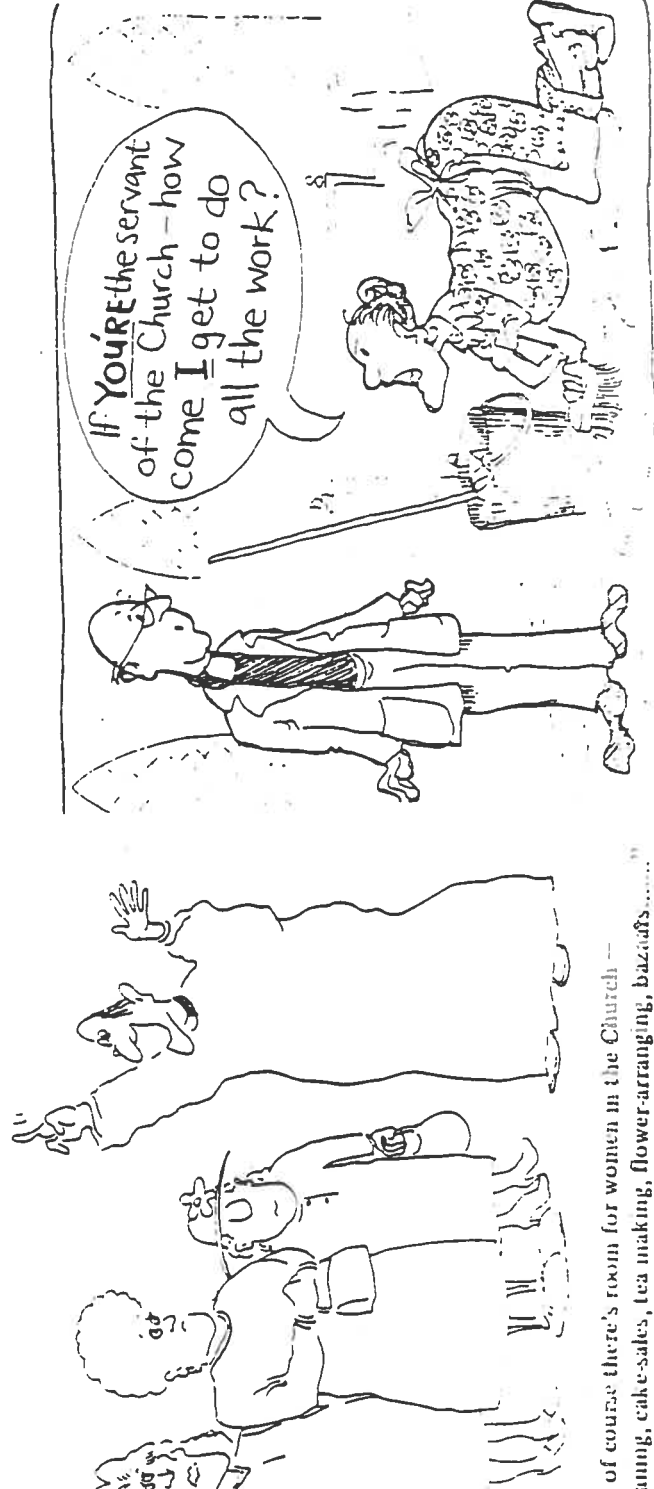
He's determined women clergy in Church
 itself off from the in
 of Christian thinking
 But a majority
 are behind a rep
 argues that the logic



Debbie Lish Mason



'How many miracles can a woman do? Give birth, love, bleed... and still seem unclean...'
 Radio 4, 11.0 am LW Gardens of Eden



of course there's room for women in the Church —
 aung, cake-sales, tea making, flower-arranging, bazaars.....

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