

# Bishop responds to Daily Mail



3 October 2006

The Editor

Daily Mail

Sir

The Mail is wrong to say that the Church of England is thinking of dropping the use of 'He' or 'Lord' to refer to God, or that hymns such as Fight the Good Fight "may be headed for the dustbin." (Thou shalt not refer to God as He or Lord, p5, 3 October). What the report Responding to Domestic Abuse says is that such masculine imagery can be, and is, misused by abusers to justify ill-treatment and violence by men against women.

It goes on to say that misuse ought to be countered not by throwing out the traditional language but by explaining it to make clear that it does not support abusive behaviour. For Christians all language about God refers back to Jesus who showed the nature of God to be self-giving love.

The guidelines say that marriage may lead to the beginning or increase of abuse, but this is a point about abusers, not a criticism of marriage. The purpose of mentioning this is positive - to see marriage preparation as an opportunity for teaching on abuse and discussing how to deal with conflict.

The Church of England is totally committed to the institution of marriage, believing it is a God-given way for a man and a woman to grow in mutual love and support. The fact that abuse takes place in marriage, as well as outside it, does not undermine its value.

**The Rt Rev Graham James**

**Bishop of Norwich**

