

they were nominated but had at the point of nomination no lay chairs, no deanery synod secretaries, no standing committee. To get things going I asked the three Rural Deans to name an evening they could all manage, and then I convened the members of the two previous deanery synods for the changeover. These two deaneries were there formally dissolved, their synodical members were asked liturgically to give themselves to the three new synods being formed, and the three new Rural Deans were then commissioned and duly welcomed by their (just formed) deanery synods. The whole eucharist was relatively brief, and thus the three synods dispersed after it to separate rooms where they could elect their appropriate officers and come into action.

Secondly, I found myself writing liturgy for the imminent demolition of a church building. This was not for the first time; and, as with the previous time, the existing fabric was deemed too dangerous for worshippers to enter. The words 'deconsecration' ('desecration'?) were used at an early stage of discussion, but I recalled attempts on the Liturgical Commission over thirty years ago to answer a request for a service of deconsecration. At that time, the more we looked at it, the more sure we were that there was no actual substance to the notion—and we made suggestions merely for the readings and psalmody at a last service held on particular premises. That was all we could call it—'the last service'. (There were frivolous remarks then about the consecrated building being now turned into cash but not losing its existence thereby—but the liturgical expression of such mythical continuity was neither easy to identify nor particularly appealing anyway . . .).

Has anyone out there experience in these fields? Or have you a 'once-off' to report yourself.

COB

---

ISSN 0263-7170

50p

Editorial address: 37 South Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2UJ  
Phone 0208-699-7771 Fax: 0208-699-7949  
E-mail: bishop.colin@dswark.org.uk

Postal subscription for 2001 £7.50 (by air £10.00, US\$20.00)

**GROVE BOOKS LIMITED**  
RIDLEY HALL RD CAMBRIDGE CB3 9HU  
Tel: 01223 464748 Fax: 01223 464849

---

# News of Liturgy

Editor: Colin Buchanan

Issue No 317

May 2001

## EDITORIAL

I have had a haunting suspicion since the days of the Revision Committee on Rite A (in the years 1978-9) that we ought to have a closer look at 'mystery' as it appears in liturgy. My suspicion deepened when Common Worship came along; and so I now address it.

As I understand it, in the New Testament the main meaning of the Greek *musterion* is that there is a profound truth of God which in earlier times was concealed, but with the coming of Christ has been revealed (Eph.3.6). This is close to the sole use in the Gospels (Matt. 13.11; Mark 4.11; Luke 8.10). As Paul sets it out in Ephesians 3.1-13 (and quite possibly implies in 1.9 and 6.19), the particular mystery to which he refers is the inclusion of the Gentiles within the people of God, as no longer aliens and strangers. In Colossians, from much the same time in Paul's imprisonment, the mystery is Christ himself (Col. 2.2; 4.3—but cf. 1.26 where the revelation of Christ is a revelation that he is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews). In Romans 11.25 there is a special twist on this, but here and in Romans 16.25 the use fits well with the Ephesians sense. Other somewhat variegated uses come in 1 Corinthians 4.1 and 15.51 and in 1 Timothy 3.9 and 3.16, though they all seem to stand near to central truths of the gospel, and truths which could not have been guessed but had to be revealed. Suggestions of something a whisker more esoteric (and linked with *sophia* and *gnosis*) come in 1 Corinthians 2.7 and 13.2. In 1 Corinthians 14.2 we get the nearest approach to our English sense of a mystery. The oddity in Paul's writings is Ephesians 5.32, where marriage is 'a great mystery'. Whilst this, on a straight rendering of the word into English, may strike both the married and unmarried as self-evidently true, it is clear that it cannot be rendered straight, and its meaning is perhaps more like 'a cryptic analogy', because the reference to marriage proves ultimately to be not so much an exhortation about marriage as an illustration about Christ and the church. The Vulgate, of course, at this point (but no other?) turned *musterion* into 'sacramentum', and thus helped propagate not only the notion that marriage is a classified sacrament, but that sacraments are 'mysteries'—and perhaps you can now see where we are going. I don't know of other authors in the New Testament who use the word, except the

writer of the Revelation, and he has widely varying uses in 1.20;10.7; 17.5 and 17.7 (in which the first and third (and fourth) look like 'cryptic analogies'—one good, one bad—and the second is simply the gospel itself).<sup>2</sup> Thessalonians 2.7 has a use like the bad one. Christians like also to use 'mystic' as an adjective ('mystic rose!'); and there is always mysticism (possibly Eastern) in the offing—but the affinity to these New Testament uses of 'mystery' is problematical.

I do not want to stay on the propensity of some generations for calling sacraments 'mysteries' (and a look at 1662 is needed, where Cranmer's use of 'holy mysteries' runs on in the long exhortation and the post-communion thanksgiving). I am really making a slow beeline for the narrative of institution in the classic Roman mass. Here the actual text read (as the narrative does read in all rites) as reporting Jesus' words at the Last Supper; however the Roman text reported Jesus' words as '... my blood, the new and eternal covenant, the mystery of faith'. This text was all very well whilst the celebration was in Latin, but, when the rite was put into both English and other vernaculars after the Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, quite apart from questions which arose from the writing of new eucharistic prayers, it was patent to every worshipper that the text was fastening onto Jesus words which had no scriptural basis as history and no other authenticity.

What the Roman Catholics in fact did was to hold onto the phrase and relocate it outside the narrative of institution, so that it was not abandoned but did not any longer purport to be the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. With the coming of new prayers, a standard narrative of institution was included (which allowed for the same ceremonial to accompany the use of any prayer), and a congregational acclamation was added for the first time (there is some reason to think that the Roman Catholics got the idea of acclamations from the Church of South India, where the original liturgiographers of 1948-50 had deliberately laid the Syrian Orthodox Liturgy of St James under contribution for its acclamations—on which point see the notice further on about next month's publication; but I am straying).

The acclamations needed careful controlling in the Roman eucharistic prayers. Why so? Ah, because the narrative of institution was a (the?) ceremonial high point, where 'consecration' led into elevation, genuflexion, and bell-ringing (if no more). The acclamations were not to intrude and cut short the ceremonial until they were wanted, so, unlike the provision in South India (and unlike our C/E provision of Series 3 a few years later) a cue line was written to introduce the acclamations—so when the president of the rite is ready for it, and perhaps after a measured interval since he has said '... in remembrance of me', he can bring them in as he sees fit. And the cue line was ...

'Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.' (followed by the acclamations)

So far, so Roman. There was an element of what I have called 'relocation' of 'mystery', without simply dumping it. Series 3 communion, which was the point at which the CSI acclamations entered the Church of England liturgy, had no such

Funeral services, which attracted over 250 people to Diocesan-wide events, mainly clergy to begin with, but with a growing number of Readers and laity. We haven't yet imported speakers, having Trevor Lloyd our chairman taking a large part of the leading for us, and running workshops ourselves. On a more local level, essential in rural Devon, several of our committee have been invited to churches and Deaneries to introduce Common Worship, and to provide training and consultancy on worship.

This year the emphasis has changed to providing training in more specific areas. We are about to run a day on the new Wholeness and Healing services, involving some of our local hospital chaplains. There is obviously a demand for this, particularly from lay people who are involved in parish prayer groups, as well as clergy who have more formal liturgy in mind.

We are also planning days on Initiation and Looking at Funerals for children in the autumn—the latter attracting a lot of interest already. Our DLC had an 'in-house' conference on presidency, and we hope to provide a day for clergy looking at the new issues and questions CW may spark off in this area.

A development which promises to be exciting is the idea of taking good models of worship to local parishes and deaneries. We are working on the first of a series of evening services around the diocese, which will be planned by local people who come together first for a general evening on planning and leading and involving others in worship. This will be followed by more specific planning by a small group, and lead to a Sunday afternoon session for anyone interested, with workshops on e.g. music, drama, planning and leading worship, leading intercessions. This will culminate in a service of worship involving what has been planned and learnt in the afternoon. We are fortunate to be able to use the skills of Andrew Maries on the music side, and various members of the DLC will be involved leading workshops in different areas of the diocese. Hopefully this will involve parishes which would otherwise not come to training events, and help to 'earth' good liturgical practice where people actually worship Sunday by Sunday.

Liz Simpson. South Molton  
DLC Secretary

## LITURGY FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

I seem to have been drawing up liturgy for some unusual occasions recently, and two of them are perhaps worth a mention here.

Firstly, we had in Greenwich the turning of two deaneries in the borough into three. It proved there were difficulties for the new Rural Deans in this matter, as

As they worked on the new liturgy, did the members of the Liturgical Commission really think that this wording was inclusive? Whether it is legal or not, I for one will be using a different phrase at this point during the remaining days of the Easter period, and I hope others will do the same.

Yours sincerely

(The Rev) Blanche Clancey

Sanderstead

#### Next Month's Publications . . .

. . . are, firstly, Worship Series no 164, *Reflecting on Preaching*, by Phillip Tovey and Charles Chadwick. Have you ever thought of the history of your preaching ministry? Are there lessons to be learned? This booklet develops the ideas of reflective practice and applies them to preaching with many practical suggestions on how to do this.

. . . and, secondly, Joint Liturgical Study no 49, *The Syrian Liturgy of St James: A Brief History for Students*, by Dr Baby Varghese of the Syrian Orthodox Seminary in Kottayam (where the last *Societas* congress was held). This is a Study which will open windows galore for Westerners, for not only is the history as recorded likely to cover ground untrodden by most English-speaking liturgists, but equally the surrounding field of study and its other scholarly occupants (who are laid heavily under contribution) will also be largely unknown. Well, yes, I may be universalizing from my own ignorance, but I rest my case and await sufficient correction to falsify it. A better way of putting it is that, if you even suspect you have a lacuna in your studies at this point, make sure you get a copy and read it. There is a whole world of liturgy in the East, explored from within by an expert, in this Study.

#### . . . and the new edition

of W158, *The Eucharistic Prayers of Order One*, by Colin Buchanan and Charles Read, is now available, the edition from June 2000 being sold out. The new edition brings the page numbers and other detail from the main Common Worship book into the text, instead of using the April 2000 'sample' text on which the first edition was based.

#### DIOCESAN REPORTS (2001-2 CYCLE)—4—EXETER

Like most other Dioceses, we had a rush of people wanting to learn about the new services last year, and ran training days on Common Worship generally, and on the

cue—the response in 1973 came immediately upon ' . . . in remembrance of me.' It was not long, however, before borrowing of the Roman cueing began, and by the time that Series 3 was being transmuted into Rite A in 1978-79, some vigorous advocacy arose—and, typically of the way we did Rite A, the cue was allowed by a permission written into the opening notes which came before the liturgical text (see note 15 on page 117 of the ASB). It was then worked into the main text of the communion booklet produced by the Additional Curates Society and in other local printings, until it was nearly *de rigueur*. I have a suspicion it got a further boost in practice when women were ordained deacon (from March 1987 onwards) but could not yet be ordained presbyter—the hunt was on for liturgical things for deacons to do, and one of them proved to be to cue the congregational acclamations (though the ASB note actually specified '*the president*').

Now in Common Worship the thing has run almost its full course. Further following of Rome has led to a variety of acclamations (all good and acceptable in themselves), and that has helped the case for cue words—but different ones now for each set of acclamations so that congregations can respond aright because only one set of acclamations fits with each different cue line (and, of course, you have to use them). The 'mystery of faith' stuff still cues '**Christ has died / Christ is risen . . .**', though the style is now to forget the 'Let us . . .' form and instead simply announce 'Great is the mystery of faith'. It does no harm; it is indeed patient of a very profound meaning; but its purpose now is to awake a Pavlov-like liturgical response rather than to say anything useful itself.

So then I am left wondering aloud whether we would ever have picked 'Great is the mystery of faith' in its own right. I find the New Testament use of 'mystery' rare and neither transparent nor univocal for ordinary worshippers today. I doubt if its series of meanings are worth compressing into one and putting into any catechism today, and I fear each worshipper is left to make of it whatever he or she can (though the more it has a Pavlovian purpose, the less it matters what it means—the mere uttering of the syllables from up front will do . . . ).

---

Whilst I am on the subject of acclamations, I ought to report that two readers have written in to say that there is no inconsistency—and thus no kind of error—in the rubric '*one of these four acclamations may be used*' on CW page 176. It is easy to understand, they claim, for the '*may*' means that in Prayers A, B, C, E, and G one will be used, and in Prayers D, F and H none will be used. That is a brilliant harmonization of texts, and I congratulate them. But I have a sneaking memory that investigation would show there is an element of sheer accident about the fact that they can be so harmonized. Perhaps someone on the Revision Committee can assure us otherwise.

Colin Buchanan

## THE NEW LITURGICAL COMMISSION

An Archbishops' Council circular of 8 May reports that the Archbishops have now appointed the new Liturgical Commission, as follows:

The Bishop of Salisbury (David Stancliffe) (*Chairman*)  
Mrs. Angela Ashwin\*  
The Rev. Canon Anders Bergquist\*  
The Rev. Dr. Paul Bradshaw  
The Rev. Canon Christopher Cocksworth  
The Rev. Peter Craig-Wild\*  
Ms Dana Delap\*  
The Rev. Jeremy Fletcher  
The Rev. Canon Jeremy Haselock  
The Rev. Canon David Kennedy\*  
The Rev. George Kovoov\*  
The Rev. Canon Graham Kings\*  
The Rev. Dr. Paul Roberts\*  
The Rev. Angela Tilby

New members are asterisked. Paul Bradshaw was not on the 1996-2001 Commission, but was on the 1981-86 one (and then went to the USA). It looks as though the following have not been reappointed from the 1996-2001 Commission (and here, more like our usual style, we drop titles):

Andrew Burnham, Carole Cull, Susan Hope, P.D. James, James Jones, Anna de Lange, Stephen Oliver, Michael Perham, Jane Sinclair, Timothy Slater, Bro Tristram.

The announcement says other names may follow (presumably to include a bishop to succeed David Stancliffe whose own term of office is alleged to be ending mid-quinquennium). And NOL would not be surprised if Trevor Lloyd and Michael Perham are not somewhere in the offing and being useful, even if not actually listed. David Hebblethwaite continues as secretary.

As we understand it, the three major bits of work unfinished from the previous Commission are: (a) daily offices; (b) 'times and seasons'; (c) the ordinal. Watch this space.

## IN DEFENCE OF COMMON WORSHIP INFANT BAPTISM

by Colin Buchanan

In March two writers in the CEN, Jeremy Collingwood and Steve Daughtery (whom I shall call 'the two'), attacked the Common Worship infant baptism rite. I wrote a reply which was published a month later, and I reproduce the most serious part of it here, and also refer anyone disturbed by their thrust to my recent Grove Booklet on CW infant baptism.

.....  
Their first big complaint concerns the place of a response by parents and godparents. They write that this response began the ASB rite, but in CW 'the support of children in

contributions to CW are widely noted and acknowledged. How does one get to be a liturgical writer?

NZPB may not draw material from as many sources, but the liturgical provision reflects a much wider variety of tone in worship.

I am left wondering whether the synodical process in the UK doesn't rather discourage liturgical writers from offering material, both because it is a stop-go process (20 years and then suddenly a need for new material, but no/few new authors in the meantime) and the tendency of a conservative synod to misunderstand and amend perfectly good poetic texts (I note that one of Jim Cotter's pieces—alternative to the Lord's Prayer—was so adapted in New Zealand, David Frost's reflections are also pertinent here).

Liturgical innovation, of course, does not die; neither do the CW authorized texts establish a uniformity of tone. Music—whether worship songs to guitars, plainsong, choral settings, organ, Taize or Iona—thrive with wide diversity even within each idiom. The drama of worship is endlessly varied. Settings likewise.

My main question is . . .

What is the CofE doing to encourage good new liturgical writing—why not prizes or awards for new liturgical texts [these need not be authorised, but could be used to encourage a group of competent liturgical writers; the focus could one year be on collects, another on aspects of the eucharistic prayer etc]? Then when it next comes to revise or extend we might actually have some resources on hand. And why not draw as widely as NZ? Why, as it were, draw only on the liturgical commission and their friends?

The current process of authorizing liturgy seems to go against the creation of a tradition of good liturgical writing rather than nurturing it.

Food for thought?

Best wishes, and keep being interesting and provocative,

Mark Bennet

Dear Colin

I have been a lifelong advocate of inclusive language . . . Sadly, the ASB was produced just too early to be aware of the need for it, but then came that beacon of hope, *Lent—Holy week—Easter*. From that time onwards, together with thousands of others, I was awaiting the next Service Book to be produced. The awaited 1990 came and went, and eventually Common Worship was published and authorized for use. Here at last, after a lifetime of waiting, I thought we had arrived.

Imagine my horror in this Easter period when I read the Extended Preface for use with Eucharistic Prayers A, B and E, and I came across these words: 'Jesus Christ . . . restored *in men and women* the image of your glory.' (Italics mine.) There were children present in the congregation; so what did this phrase say about them? If they were listening to the words as intently as I did as a child, what did the phrase convey to them?

I have yet to 'hear any teenage evangelical tell God everything' at a baptism, but I have in retirement officiated at several baptisms when the families concerned have been solidly working people and no-one has displayed the slightest embarrassment at repeating the words before them. Nor indeed did any of the UPA families in my previous, largely UPA, parish. Certainly most of these did have some association with the Church: I recognize that those who rarely if ever attend may well have some difficulty with the responses they are expected to make. But I fear I remain somewhat sceptical as to whether the archetypal Northern working man is 'wanting to do his best for the child'. My experience tends to support the more robustly honest comment of one dad that the occasion provides an opportunity for a good booze-up.

Then we are treated to the astonishing accusation that the eucharistic prayers are dominated by the concept of substitutionary atonement! Ironically at a recent clergy gathering the complaint was voiced that precisely this element was absent in them! I can find no explicit reflection of the key Pauline and Petrine texts which form the traditional understanding of this doctrine—by no means the only perspective on the atonement but certainly one which is dear to evangelicals. This has always been a prime factor in motivating sacrificial service and giving; perhaps a reason for the levels of giving in evangelical parishes compared with many others? It has also undergirded the theology and spirituality of many members of the black-led churches. They are hardly likely to be encouraged in the Churches Together process if they hear this described as a 'travesty'.

Meanwhile I rejoice that on Good Friday I shared with Anglo-Catholics, Roman Catholics and others in singing the hymn 'Man of Sorrows' (no. 330 in *Hymns Old and New*) with its immortal couplet

... In my place condemned he stood;  
sealed my pardon with his blood ...

Yours unapologetically

Pat Dearnley  
Ilkley

Dear Colin

I write as an ordinand (incidentally from Southwark) in relation to Jean Marland's comments in NOL for March and April. My MA dissertation will, if all goes well, compare the inherent assumptions of the New Zealand Prayer Book of 1989 and Common Worship [I spent six weeks on pastoral placement in Auckland in 1999].

Much has been written about liturgy recently, and naturally so, but a lot less about the writers of liturgical texts. Jean Maryland mentions with regret the missed opportunity to draw material from Jim Cotter, Janet Morley and Iona. Also mentioned in NOL of 4/01 are Leo Stephens-Hodge (who, it is suggested, did not contribute all he might have done), David Frost (by JM) whose contribution was, it appears, rather reluctantly received (and in his Grove Booklet, the title of which eludes me at present, he is rather eloquent on the subject) and Michael Vasey whose

their Christian growth is left until the Commission at the end of the service [and is there done wrong]' (italics and square brackets mine). I read this with total incredulity. What, I thought, of the careful questions to parents and godparents in 'Presentation'? I read on, following the cross-headings from the rite which highlighted each of their paragraphs ('The Liturgy of the Word', 'The Decision' etc.), all in a very clear sequence. BUT—and it is an extraordinary BUT—the section on CW page 352 entitled 'Presentation of the Candidates' is simply omitted by them. I read their article again; I went to the booklet and card offprints; I checked *Visual Liturgy*; and the Presentation section appears in every official text there is. It comes at the very beginning of the major division 'The Liturgy of Baptism', before 'The Decision'. After an optional 'presentation' of the infant candidates to the congregation (which might be simply introducing families by name, or might be omitted), there is first a question to the congregation about welcoming and upholding the candidates (adult, child or infant), and then come immediately the two questions which are unique to the baptism of children:

Parents and godparents, the Church receives these children with joy.  
Today we are trusting God for their growth in faith.  
Will you pray for them,  
draw them by your example into the community of faith  
and walk with them in the way of Christ?'

and

'In baptism these children begin their journey in faith.  
You speak for them today.  
Will you care for them,  
and help them take their place  
within the life and worship of Christ's Church?'

Now, one might argue about whether these questions overlap each other, or whether they match the ASB form 'you must answer both for yourselves and for these children.' Those are the arguments we had on the Revision Committee, and I address them in my Grove Booklet. BUT (I need capitals) it looks either mischievous or incompetent to enter the CEN's public arena, there to omit all mention of the crucial texts under your nose, and then to build your case upon the alleged total absence of such texts. For a boxer to deride his opponent's strength is one thing; but to insist he has failed to arrive and so claim a walkover, when in fact the man is visible in the opposite corner, is quite another—the combat cannot then even start, let alone be decided.

Their other big complaint concerns 'baptismal regeneration'. They acknowledge that 'Scriptures uses efficacious language' about baptism, but think we should not. But surely scriptural language has *prima facie* claim? This was the BCP language (to which indeed the 1850 Gorham Judgment gave the interpretative key); this was the ASB language; and this is the CW language. I can here only begin a rationale; but if believers treat their children as believers (eg, by saying the Lord's Prayer—or almost any prayer—with them), then, as with adults, it is proper to treat baptism as a true beginning. If clergy suspect they sometimes baptize children of unbelievers (as the two hint), those cases are anomalous and no basis for drafting liturgy. We

could provide words like 'We pour some water on you and hope the gospel will reach you one day', but that is so far adrift from the Scriptures (and so promiscuously promoting 'indiscriminate baptism') as to be ludicrous. Sacraments function by serenely stating their own efficacy, just as hymns assume it is believers who sing 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'.

A real argument awaits, a longer one; but let it be joined with the whole text in view.

COB

### DIARY DATES

22-24 May (Residential conference 'The art of liturgical Preaching' led by John Melloh (details from Praxis, at St Mathew's House, 20 Great Peter Street, SW1P 2BU—020-7222-3704) (NOT 22-24 June, as stated in earlier issues of NOL—apologies).

7-9 September (weekend) Residential Conference 'Liturgy and Ethics', convened by the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics. The speakers appear to be heavily loaded towards ethics, though Bridget Nichols is among them. Details from the Rev. Dr. Colin Hart, St. John's College, Bramcote, Nottingham (0115 925 1114).

15 September (Saturday) 'Using Common Worship' for Hereford clergy (details from Canon Paul Iles (01432-266193))

4 October (Thursday) 'Using Common Worship' for Ludlow clergy (details from Canon Paul Iles (01432-266193))

23 October (Wednesday) Liturgical Commission's meeting with diocesan liturgical committee reps. (London).

3 November (Saturday) Anglican Renewal Ministries training day at St Luke's, Cranham, Essex 10—5.30 on 'Bringing Common Worship to Life' (cost £10, ring 01708-222562 (mornings))

[The expectation is that roughly four months at a time will appear each month, so that in June further November fixtures will be added—but there may be plenty more to appear within the months aired above still. Do send your information in.]

COB

### BOOK REVIEWS

Mark Chapman, *Liturgy, Socialism and Life: The Legacy of Conrad Noel* (DLT for Affirming Catholicism, vi/54 pp pocketbook size, 2001, £3.95)

Conrad Noel was vicar of the famously colourful (and because of him politically radical) parish of Thaxted from 1910 till (I think) his death in 1942. I asked for a review copy of this book because of its title (and some passing awareness of mine of Thaxted's place in history). It has to be said, however, that this proves to be a very slight book, and that its focus on actual liturgy is even slighter. There is a difficulty—David Edwards quotes Chesterton as skitting the Christian Social Union

as 'singing hymns to help the unemployed', and that problem of how to get liturgy actually to be the engine of political change underlies this Chapman book. His presentation of Noel quite properly and engagingly includes his First World War pacifism, his support for the Easter rising, his applause for the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, and his averred solidarity with the coal strikers in 1926. There is a whole chapter on 'The Battle of the Flags', the time when he placed against the chancel arch: the red flag, the flag of St George, and the Irish tricolour. All this—but actually nothing about liturgy. Yes, there were processions in the streets; yes, there was Morris dancing before and after; yes, there were battles over reserved seats; yes, there was a mixed choir; and, yes, he introduced incense. There is reference to his 'reforms'. But of content to them, I could find barely a flicker.

COB

Jospeth Pearce (compiler) *A Thousand Years of Christian Verse* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2000, p/b, £6.99)

What is 'Christian verse'—verse written by Christians, or verses about Christianity? Most, though not quite all, of the verse in this book is of the latter variety—but it is quite a variety. The intention in choosing the contributors was primarily to span the millennium, and in this, the book succeeds. There is a good variety of authors from Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) to George Mackay Brown (1921-96). What is sometimes strange is the space given to one author, eg Francis Thompson merits ten poems while Gerard Manley Hopkins has only five. There are also very few contributions here by twentieth century writers—it would have been good to have had some verses by a poet aged less than 70 in the 1960s. Perhaps that is rather unfair criticism for a book which does very well in choosing a fairly representative collection. The other attractive feature of the book is a short introduction for each poet, setting them in their historical and religious context—but why there is such an emphasis on explaining whether the later poets were Catholics or anglo-catholics, I'm not quite sure.

Overall, a good poetry collection which includes some less well-known material—don't let the flowery title put you off!

Liz Simpson

### CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Colin

With regard to Jean Mayland's contribution in the March issue of NOL, I fear the lady doth protest too much. I confess to having some sympathy with her criticisms of aspects of the new services, especially the 1662-type collects. But in reality her strictures are directed at the (alleged) 'current evangelical domination of the Synod and the Church'. (I seem to have been hearing this wail since the mid-70s).