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Anglicans embrace Mariolatry



A typical false image of Mary presented by Rome

Members of the Anglican church are being asked by their representatives on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (Arcic) to accept Roman Catholic teaching regarding the Virgin Mary and view the errors of mariolatry as “authentic expressions of Christian belief”. The proposals came in a document, agreed by leading theologians and prelates of both churches and published in America at a Roman Catholic Mass in Seattle by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and a few days later in the UK at Westminster Abbey. The document is titled: “Mary: Hope and Grace in Christ.”

The long-awaited document, published after six years of discussion, effectively seeks to destroy the teaching of the Reformers, which was essentially the teaching of the Bible, about the place given to Mary in the Scriptures. The document states that there is “no continuing theological reason for ecclesial division” over the role of the Virgin Mary. “We do not consider the practice of asking Mary and the saints to pray for us as communion dividing,” it says. The document also describes private devotions inspired by apparitions of Mary as “acceptable”. The passage in the report likely to cause most offence to Bible-believers, states that Rome’s “infallible” dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption — the teachings that Mary was herself conceived “without sin” and that on death she was “assumed” body and soul into Heaven — are “consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures”. While the document is not authoritative it is intended to be a basis for discussion. Its authors admit openly to the hope that the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion will recognise a “common faith” concerning Mary as outlined in the paper.

NO OBSTACLE

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, Malcolm McMahon, one of 18 delegates from ten countries who served on Arcic, said the document showed that Mary need no longer be considered an obstacle to unity between Anglicans and Catholics. He said: “What we have done is put down a paving stone on the road to Christian unity.” The document is published at a sensitive time in Anglican-Catholic relations. The last Pope, John Paul II, was noted for his devotion to Mary. He also made clear his dismay over the direction the Anglican Communion was taking over the ordination of women and more recently of homosexuals. Unity talks between the two churches foundered and the publication of the Mary document was delayed after the American Anglican church consecrated the openly homosexual Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. The appointment of Pope Benedict XVI, who previously was the Vatican’s doctrinal enforcer, and as such dismissed Protestant commu-



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nities as not “proper” churches, has nevertheless put unity back on the agenda.

FEARS

The Mary document will reinforce growing fears among evangelicals that the Roman Catholic church is prepared to consider unity with the Anglicans once more, but, as ever, strictly on its own terms. Rev. Rod Thomas, a leading evangelical cleric who acts as spokesman for the Reform conservative grouping, said the document represented an attempt to “shoehorn into Scripture” the Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. He said: “If Mary has been wholly and completely assumed into Heaven and we are able to pray to her, it goes completely against the grain of Jesus Christ being our great high priest who intercedes on our behalf with the Father.”

NO PLACE FOR THE BIBLE

The document gives no place to the teachings of Holy Scripture on the uniqueness of Christ as the “one mediator between God and men,” 1 Timothy 2:5. This truth was the cornerstone of the Reformation and remains the cornerstone of evangelical faith today. Anglicans in Ireland need to bear in mind that whatever decision is taken regarding this document, and few will have the slightest doubt that it will ultimately be accepted, members of the Church of Ireland will be part and parcel of the consequences. Here is cause, if it had never existed before, for true believers to withdraw from the Church of Ireland.