

## THE SOCIETY FOR ECUMENICAL STUDIES

***Mary Grace and Hope in Christ – Study Edition* (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, ed. Donald Bolen and Gregory Cameron, Continuum, London/New York 2006)**

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The emergence of the remarkable ARCIC document in 2004 gained an early and deserved respect, especially for its Scriptural study of Mary and for its clarity and lucidity in all aspects of agreement and disagreement.

Mgr Donald Bolen of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Canon Gregory Cameron as Deputy Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, respectively Catholic & Anglican Secretaries of ARCIC, have successfully provided us with a handsome volume incorporating the Seattle Statement Text with commentaries and a Study Guide to draw out the key themes in the original text. The inclusion of eight colour plates within the text of this study edition is more than a nice touch of illustration. It suggests, with but a random glimpse, one of the aims of the statement: namely to clarify misconceptions about Anglican Marian spirituality alongside a more recognised, if not necessarily accepted, Catholic heritage in this regard. Dr Tim Bradshaw (Anglican Commentator) perhaps touches the heart of the issue in saying that, whatever her present role in heaven, Mary herself "must be saddened to know she is the focus of disagreement, and has been used as a badge of division between Christians.." The clear purpose of the publishing of the study edition is to dispel the notion that it is a text meant only for scholars: it is intended as an instrument through which Anglicans and Roman Catholics could come together in ecumenical encounter. The suggested 6-week study span offers a very fine tool to take us forward in a practical and perhaps influential way of making impact on a much needed understanding. While not entirely resolving differences in regard to Mary, it may help to make a clear distinction between the content of disputed dogmas and the authority by which they were defined (to which Fr Jarad Wicks draws our attention in his Roman Catholic Commentary); and thereby facilitating agreement by dialogue on the issue. The two interesting supporting essays will repay

reading and to some will usefully bring together a range of insights and material that are good to have to hand.

One would be unwise, however, to underestimate the difficulties faced, as always, over reception of the document, or as Fr Wicks reminds us of 're-reception'. But the hand has been put to the plough and there can surely be no turning back.