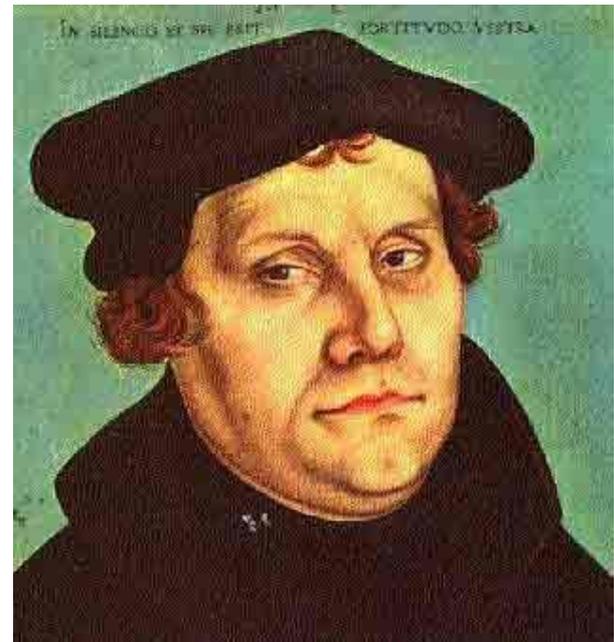


# Was the Reformation Worth It?

Understanding the differences between Catholics and evangelicals

David Snoke  
City Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Fall 2009



# Joint statements of Catholics and Protestants

On Oct. 31, 1999, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation got together to sign the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, in which the two church bodies together confessed: ***"By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part,\* we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works."***

\* Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin "in the proper sense" and that is "worthy of damnation" (Rom 8:1). There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God's original design for humanity and that it is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one's enemy in lifelong struggle. Grateful for deliverance by Christ, they underscore that this inclination in contradiction to God does not merit the punishment of eternal death and does not separate the justified person from God. **But when individuals voluntarily separate themselves from God, it is not enough to return to observing the commandments, for they must receive pardon and peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the word of forgiveness imparted to them in virtue of God's reconciling work in Christ.**

# Scripture and Tradition

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

"In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them "their own position of teaching authority." Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time."

"This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called **Tradition**, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes."

"As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, **does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone**. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with **equal sentiments of devotion and reverence**."

Reformation: "sola scriptura"

# Scripture and Tradition

## Jesus' attitude toward "tradition":

### Mark 7:5-9

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, *teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*' *You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.*"

And he said to them, "You have a fine way of *rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!* For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, *thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.* And many such things you do."

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, *according to human tradition*, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Jeremiah 23:28-30 Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another.

Scriptures are behind the “fence” of the official interpreters.

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

"The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, *has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone*. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that ***the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.***

Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me," the faithful ***receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them*** in different forms.

The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines **dogmas**, that is, when it proposes, in a form ***obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith***, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically *has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops* in communion with him.

**Reformation: no one may “bind the conscience” of the believer.**

Luther: unless I be convinced by Scripture and reason...”

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, *reasoning and persuading them* about the kingdom of God.

Does it matter?

# Forgiveness and Assurance of Heaven

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

"When we made our first profession of faith ***while receiving the holy Baptism that cleansed us, the forgiveness we received then was so full and complete that there remained in us absolutely nothing left to efface***, neither original sin nor offenses committed by our own will, nor was there left any penalty to suffer in order to expiate them. . . . ***Yet the grace of Baptism delivers no one from all the weakness of nature***. On the contrary, we must still combat the movements of concupiscence that never cease leading us into evil.

It is ***through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God*** and with the Church:

Penance has rightly been called by the holy Fathers "a laborious kind of baptism." ***This sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation*** for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn.

There is no offense, however serious, that ***the Church*** cannot forgive.

By Christ's will, ***the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized*** and exercises it through bishops and priests ***normally in the sacrament of Penance***.

Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father—every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and ***contributes to the forgiveness of our sins***.

## Reformation: “sola fide.”

John 6:29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

John 20:31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 15:9 and he made no distinction between us and them, *having cleansed their hearts by faith.*

Romans 3:20a For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.

Romans 3:27-28 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. *For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

Romans 4:5 And to the one who *does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly*, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, *it is no longer on the basis of works*; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

Gal. 2:16 Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, *in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law*, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Ephesians 2:8-8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, *not a result of works*, so that no one may boast.

Does it matter?

# Mortal and venial sins

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

Sins are rightly evaluated according to their gravity. The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already evident in Scripture, became part of the ***tradition of the Church***. It is corroborated by ***human experience***.

Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.

Mortal sin, by attacking the vital principle within us—that is, charity—necessitates a new initiative of God's mercy and a conversion of heart which is normally accomplished within the setting of the sacrament of reconciliation.

One commits venial sin when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full knowledge or without complete consent.

**Reformation: As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those, who truly repent. (WCF)**

# Do small sins not matter?

Luke 16:10 One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

Matthew 12:34b-37: For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, son the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 5:21 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

Matthew 5:27 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

# Can Christians go for periods of time without doing any sins that deserve condemnation?

Romans 3:20-13 As it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.  
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good, not even one.  
Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.  
The venom of asps is under their lips.”

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Does it matter?

# Forgiveness and Assurance of Heaven

The Sacrament of confession/penance is necessary for forgiveness of mortal sins.

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

**"Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy** for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion."

It is called the sacrament of confession, since ***the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament***. In a profound sense it is also a "confession"—acknowledgment and praise—of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since ***by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace."***

It is called the sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God." He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother."

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and ***have thus lost their baptismal grace*** and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers ***a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification.***

"The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in ***restoring us to God's grace*** and joining us with him in an intimate friendship." ***Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament.***

An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin. The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.

The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but ***temporal punishment of sin remains***. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace.

Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way ***we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.***

# Finality of our relationship to Christ

Acts 13:38 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

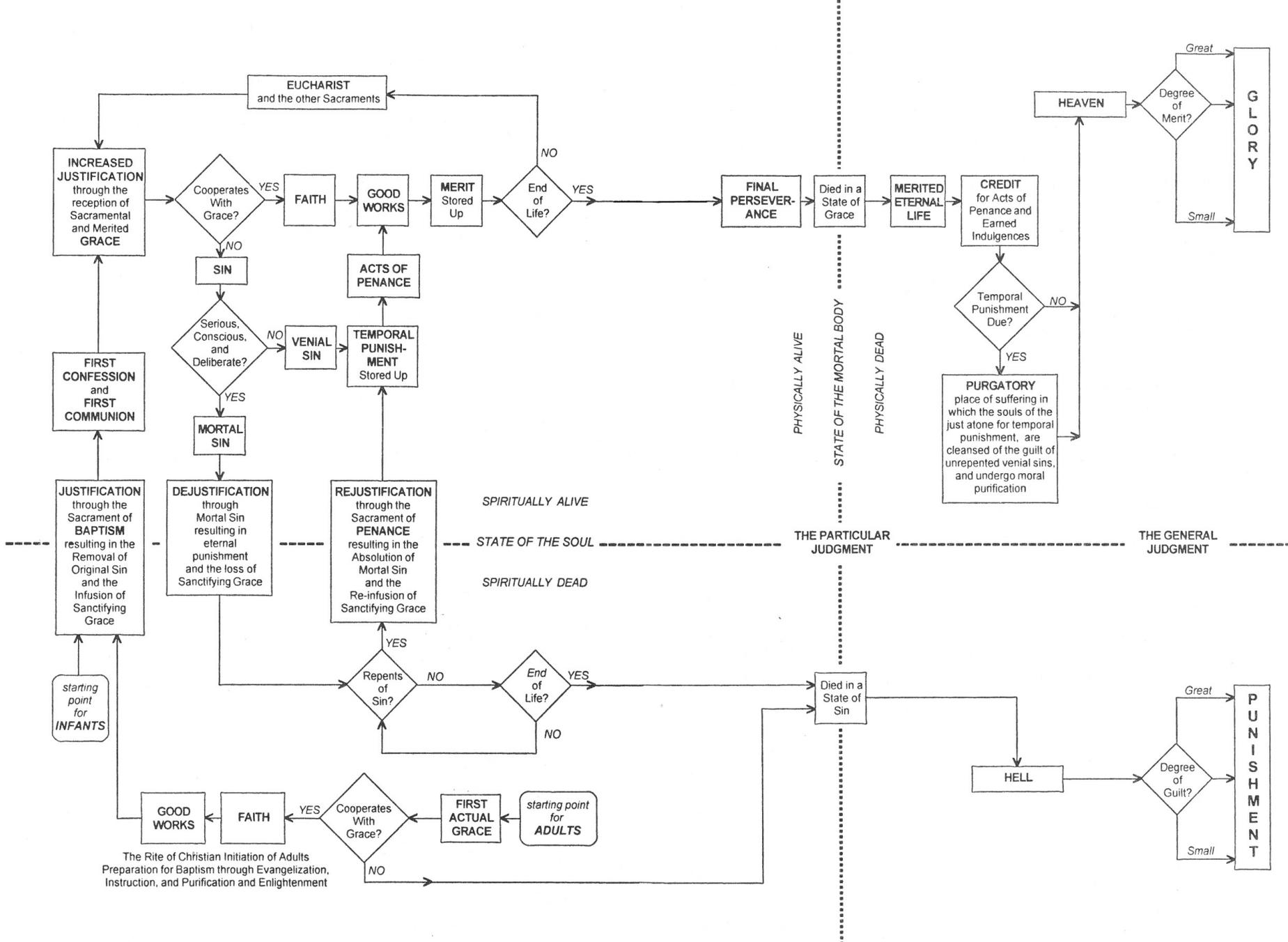
Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom 8:15-16 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Rom. 8:31-33 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

John 3:18a Whoever believes in him is not condemned.

Phil 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.



Does it matter?

# What is the communion meal?

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.

"As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, ***the work of our redemption is carried out.***"

***The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice*** because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit:

[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and ***its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.***

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

***As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.***

Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance.

**Worship of the Eucharist.** In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the ***cult of adoration***, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, ***exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful***, and carrying them in procession."

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and ***this living charity wipes away venial sins***. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him:

The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins—that is proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church.

## Do Christians need a Re-sacrifice?

Hebrews 9:24-26 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ***Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly***, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared ***once for all*** at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Heb. 10:11-14 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered ***for all time a single sacrifice*** for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For ***by a single offering he has perfected for all time*** those who are being sanctified.

**Reformation: the proper administration of the sacraments is crucial.**

Does it matter?

# The role of Mary

from the *Catholic Catechism*:

Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it.

"This ***union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation*** is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death"; it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion:

"Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and ***exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things***, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death." The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.

"Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. In a wholly singular way ***she cooperated*** by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity ***in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls***. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace."

No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source."

"The Church's ***devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.***"

Reformation: solo Christo.

# Does God share devotion?

Ex. 34:14 You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Luke 4:8 And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

Ex. 20:4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God.

Rev. 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

Is. 42:8 “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to idols.”

Is. 48:11b “I will not yield my glory to another.”

Jeremiah 44:16-23 Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah:

“As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you. But we will do everything that we have vowed, *make offerings to the queen of heaven* and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem....

Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who had given him this answer:

“As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. *It is because you made offerings* and because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his testimonies *that this disaster has happened to you*, as at this day.”

Matt. 12:46 While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*”

Does it matter?