

LORD'S DAY 20

53. Q. What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?

A. First,
He is, together with the Father and the Son,
true and eternal God. ¹
Second,
He is also given to me, ²
to make me by true faith
share in Christ and all His benefits, ³
to comfort me, ⁴
and to remain with me forever. ⁵

1. **Genesis 1:1,2** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:3,4 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

2. **1 Corinthians 6:19** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

2 Corinthians 1:21,22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, ²² who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

3. **Galatians 3:14** ...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

1 Peter 1:2 ...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

4. **John 15:26** But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

5. **John 14:16,17** And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

1 Peter 4:14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

We have completed the first two parts of the Apostles' Creed which deal with the work of God the Father and with the work of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Now in the third and last part of the Apostles' Creed we will deal with the work of God the Holy Spirit.

In this Lord's Day the Catechism does two things, it answers two questions:

“Who is the Holy Spirit?” and “What does the Holy Spirit do?”

Who is the Holy Spirit?

You should notice that we say “Who?” and not “What?” For the Holy Spirit is a Person and not just a power as some claim. In saying that the Holy Spirit is a person, we do not thereby deny that He has power. Indeed, the Spirit is a powerful Person.

Furthermore, the Catechism teaches us that the Holy Spirit is true and eternal God. We confess that He has the same divine nature as the Father and the Son. He has the same rank, the same honour. He, too, is eternal, without beginning and end. That the Holy Spirit is true God can be shown from the Scriptures in four ways:

1. By the **divine names** which are attributed to Him:

- 2 Peter 1:21 - *“holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*
- 2 Timothy 3: 16 - *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”* (Compare these two texts with each other. In one place, we read that the men who wrote the Scriptures were moved by the Holy Spirit, and in another that these men were inspired by God. The conclusion from these two texts is that the Spirit is God.)
- Acts 5:3-4 *“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”* (Lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God.)

2. By the **divine attributes** which are ascribed to Him:

- 1 Corinthians 2: 10-11 - *“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit **searches all things**, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”* (The Spirit is here described as being *omniscient - all knowing*, which is only true of God.)

- 1 Cor 3:16 - *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (A temple is where God dwells. Paul says the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Thus we conclude that the Holy Spirit is God.)

- Isaiah 40: 13 - *“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him?”*

- Romans 11:34 - *For who has known the mind of the LORD? or who has become His counselor?”* (Rom. 11:34 is Paul’s quotation of Is.40: 13. Paul identifies “the Spirit of the Lord” and “the LORD.”)

3. By the **divine works** which He performs:

- Acts 20:28 - *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”* (The Holy Spirit appoints men as office-bearers in the church.)
- 1 Corinthians 12:11 - *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”* (The Holy Spirit decides who will receive His gifts, and in what measure.)

4. By the **divine honours** paid to Him:

- Matthew 12:32 - *“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”* (The Holy Spirit receives no less honour than the Son).
- 1 Peter 4:14 - *“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”*

These are only some of the texts which show us that the Holy Spirit is not just an

impersonal power, but a powerful Person, who is above all true God.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The second thing which the Catechism describes is the work of the Holy Spirit. In Q. & A. 24, we saw from the division of the Apostles' Creed that the work of the Holy Spirit is the work of sanctification. We also mentioned in our discussion of that Lord's Day that although the main work of the Spirit is the work of sanctification, He was also involved in the work of creation, as will become clear from the following:

Creation

- **The Spirit was instrumental in the creation of the world:**

Genesis 1:2 *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Psalms 104:30 *You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.*

- **The Spirit gave beauty and form to the world:**

Job 26:13 *By His Spirit He adorned the heavens; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.*

- **The Spirit upholds creation:**

Job 34:14,15 *If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.*

Redemption

The Holy Spirit assisted Christ in fulfilling His role as Redeemer whereby He obtained our redemption (acquisition of redemption). The Holy Spirit also makes us share in the merits of Christ by working faith and spiritual renewal (application of redemption). This work of the Spirit can be seen in the following:

A. Acquiring Redemption

- **The Spirit was involved in the conception of Christ:**

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*

- **The Spirit was involved in the maturing of Christ:**

Isaiah 11:1,2 *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

Luke 2:40 *And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*

Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

- **The Spirit equipped Christ to fulfil His office:**

Matthew 3:16 *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.*

- **The Spirit enabled Christ to withstand temptation:**

Luke 4:1,2 *Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil.*

- **The Spirit enabled Christ to preach with great wisdom and boldness:**

Luke 4:14-19 *Then Jesus returned in the power of the **Spirit** to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He **taught** in*

*their synagogues, being glorified by all. So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The **Spirit** of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to **preach** the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

- **The Spirit enabled Christ to perform miracles:**

Matthew 12:28 *"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."*

- **The Spirit strengthened Christ to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin:**

Hebrews 9:14 *...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

B. Applying Redemption

- **The Spirit inspired Scripture:**

2 Samuel 23:2 *The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.*

1 Corinthians 7:40 *But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment; and I think I also have the Spirit of God.*

2 Peter 1:21 *... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...

- **The Spirit gives power to those who preach:**

Acts 1:8 *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

1 Corinthians 2:4 *And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

- **The Spirit gives understanding to those who hear the preaching:**

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

- **The Spirit convicts men of sin which leads to repentance:**

John 16:7-11 *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."*

- **The Spirit pours love for God into our hearts:**

Romans 5:5 *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has*

been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Ezekiel 11:19 *“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh.*

- **The Spirit's work enables us to confess Christ as our Lord and Saviour:**

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

- **The Spirit causes us to walk in obedience:**

Ezekiel 36:27 *“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them”.*

Philippians 2:13... *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

- **The Spirit causes us to produce good fruit:**

Galatians 5:22,23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

- **The Spirit causes us to persevere to the end:**

2 Corinthians 1:21,22 Now *He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

Ephesians 1:13,14 *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Sanctification

The chief work of the Holy Spirit is the work of “**sanctification**”. The fundamental meaning of sanctification is: “*to make holy*”. It refers to **the process by which the old nature is put to death, and the new nature is made alive**. It is the process whereby we are renewed more and more after the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as it pleases the Holy Spirit to use the means (or agency) of the reproductive organs to bring forth natural life, and just as the Spirit uses the means (or agency) of food and drink to sustain life, so the Spirit uses means to bring forth and sustain spiritual life. He uses the gospel and the sacraments. James wrote, “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth,* (James 1:18). The Word of God is the seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23,25).

In Scripture there is a very serious warning not to sin against the Spirit of God. In Scripture there are different degrees of sin against the Holy Spirit. When one sins, he **grieves** the Spirit of God (cf. Ephesians 4:30). If one continues to live in sin and does not repent, he **resists** the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 7:51). If one refuses to repent even after many exhortations, he **quenches** the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Christ said, *...he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”* (Mark 3:29). In the context, we read that the scribes blasphemed (spoke evil) of the Spirit’s work. They knowingly and deliberately said that the good work that Christ performed through the Spirit was the work of the devil. Thereby they hardened their hearts and rejected the saving grace performed by Christ through the Spirit.

When a man hardens his heart and rejects the work of the Holy Spirit, there remains no means of forgiveness. He has rejected the means that God has given for bringing him to repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts him of sin, but if he

refuses to acknowledge his sin and repent from it, and if he hardens himself against the renewing work of the Spirit, there remains no other means to bring man to repentance.

Sin against the Holy Spirit might be compared to a man whose house is quickly being swallowed up by floodwaters. The man climbs to the top of the house and there he sits. A rescue boat comes along and the man is exhorted to jump in, but he refuses to leave his housetop, for he loves his house. Other boats follow, but the man dismisses each with increasing anger, telling his would-be rescuers to

leave him alone. After a period of time, the boats cease coming and eventually the man drowns.

The Holy Spirit is He who convicts us of sin and softens our hardened hearts. However, if we harden our hearts and reject the work of the Spirit by refusing to repent despite His many exhortations, then the Holy Spirit will blind our eyes and make our ears dull, and harden our hearts still further so that repentance becomes impossible (cf. John 12:40; Hebrews 6:4-6).



Questions:

1. Into how many parts is the Apostles' Creed divided? What is dealt with in each part?
2. Is the Holy Spirit a person or a power?
3. What can you say about the nature of the Holy Spirit?
4. In what four ways does Scripture prove that the Holy Spirit is true God? Illustrate this from Scripture. Quote (in full) two texts for each of these ways and explain how they prove the divinity of the Spirit.
5. What else does the Catechism deal with besides the divinity of the Holy Spirit?
6. What three-fold task did/does the Holy Spirit perform in the matter of creation?
7. We distinguish between Christ's work of *acquiring* our redemption and His work of *applying* our redemption. Explain what these mean.
8. What seven things did the Holy Spirit do to assist Christ in His work of acquiring our redemption?
9. What nine things does the Holy Spirit do to assist Christ in His work of applying our redemption.
10. What is the chief work of the Holy Spirit? Explain what that means.
11. What means does the Holy Spirit use in order to bring forth new life in us?
12. What does Scripture say about the degrees of sin against the Holy Spirit?
13. What does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? Why is this unforgivable?