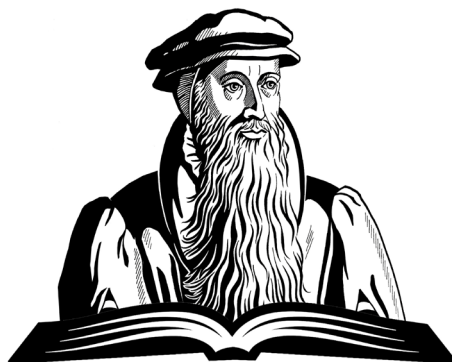

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: THE APOSTLES' CREED

LECTURE 9 ARTICLE 8: GOD AND THE HOLY GHOST

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

THE APOSTLES' CREED

13 LECTURES

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck

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THE APOSTLES' CREED

Rev. Cornelis Harinck

Transcript—Lecture 9

Article 8: God and the Holy Ghost

Dear listener, we have arrived at article 8 of the Apostles' Creed. The Christian confesses, in Article 8 of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

When the Christian confesses this, in whom and what does he believe? He thereby professes to believe in the divine person who is called, the Holy Ghost. The name, Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, is not only characteristic of the third person of the Trinity, but also explains his nature. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness. The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, as God. When Ananias lied about the price he received for his field, Peter says, "Why has Satan filled your heart, to lie the Holy Ghost? . . . you have not lied unto men, but unto God"—Acts 5, verse 3. Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit. He made it appear as if the Holy Spirit had moved his heart to do what Barnabas had done. Barnabas had sold his field to support the poor brothers and sisters in the faith. Ananias wanted to imitate this act and, like Barnabas, acquire the reputation of being an exemplary Christian. However, he didn't have the heart of Barnabas. He was duplicitous regarding the proceeds from the sale of his field, and thus, he kept most of it for himself, but he told the Apostle Peter that what he gave him was the full price of his field. Peter then said that by committing this sin, Ananias had lied against the Holy Ghost. He and his wife dropped dead before the feet of Peter. This dramatic event clearly shows that the Holy Spirit is neither the power of God nor a divine agent, but rather, he is God himself.

The Scriptures refer to the Holy Spirit as a person. Qualities are attributed to him that can only be descriptive of a person. He knows our deepest needs and desires. Paul says, in Romans 8, verse 27, "And he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is described as having a will, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will"—1 Corinthians 12, verse 11. He is described as a person of love. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit"—Romans 15, verse 30. All this cannot be said of an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Bible as a person who sees, hears, speaks, testifies, glorifies, guides, convinces, comforts, seals, assures, reveals, and so much more. In short, Scripture attributes qualities to the Holy Spirit that are only applicable to a person.

The Holy Spirit was actively engaged in creation, and the orderly arrangement of the world. In Genesis 1, verse 2, we read, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The Holy Spirit made the chaos into a splendid world. He, with the Father and the Son, is the creator of heaven and earth. Psalm 33, verse 6 says, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of the breath of God's mouth. We read of Jesus, when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, that he breathed upon them, so that they might receive the Holy Ghost: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost"—John 20, verse 22.

Based on this testimony, the early church confessed, regarding the Holy Spirit, in the Creed of Nicaea, in 325 AD, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son." The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, by a continuous divine procession, setting forth the unique manner of subsistence of the Holy Spirit. This subsistence is beyond our understanding. The Bible primarily intends to communicate to us that the subsistence of the Holy Spirit is always integrally related to the Father and the Son. That is what Scripture has

revealed to us regarding the person of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “the other Comforter.” The word “comforter” (in Greek *parakletos*), means, “a person who defends the oppressed.” Thus, we can think of either a helper or an attorney. The Holy Spirit engages himself on behalf of oppressed and tried believers, when their sins and shortcomings, the law of God, their own conscience, death and grave, and especially the devil distress them.

He then comforts them with Jesus, who is the propitiation for our sins, and the conqueror of the devil, death and hell. The Holy Spirit brings comfort down to the sinner who grieves for sin. He shows the penitent the Father’s boundless love, and the merits of the Son. He kindles hope and faith in Christ. He shows that there is forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. He heals the wounds and sores of sin with the balm of Jesus’ wounds. He tells the backslider that he is welcome to return to his God and Father. He strengthens the afflicted with the faithfulness of God. He comforts the heavy heart with the promises of God. He makes us feel the power of the promise within: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overthrow you”—Isaiah 43, verse 2. He wipes away the mourner’s tears. And he fills the heart with heavenly joy. What a blessed Comforter is the Holy Spirit!

Thus, God’s children have an advocate who intercedes for them in heaven, namely, Jesus Christ at the right hand of God—1 John 2, verses 1 and 2. And they have an advocate residing in their hearts, namely, the Holy Spirit. Jesus called the Holy Spirit, “another Comforter” (John 14:16), that is, someone other than himself. The word “other” here does not mean someone entirely different from Jesus himself—it means the exact opposite. Jesus is saying, Though he is different, yet he is of the same sort as I am. Jesus is referring to a person who can act on his behalf, and who can replace him. All that Jesus has thus far been for his disciples—their Master, Comforter, Teacher, Lord, God, and Savior—the Holy Spirit will be to them both now and in the future. The Holy Spirit can take Jesus’ place and be the other Comforter, because he is most intimately associated with Jesus and his work as Savior.

The Bible shows us continuously the close relation between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. We read in Luke 1, verse 35: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit at the commencement of his public ministry. Luke 3, verses 21 and 22 says, “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.” Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4, verses 1 and 2 says: “And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.” During Jesus’ entire earthly, public ministry, the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus. The Holy Spirit enabled him to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God. Jesus said, in the synagogue of Capernaum, that in him the prophesy regarding the Messiah was fulfilled, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18). The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to heal the sick and cast out devils. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you”—Matthew 12, verse 28. Jesus offered himself, by the Holy Spirit, to God as a sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 9, verse 14 speaks of “Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” Jesus was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8, verse 11, it is written: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.” All that Jesus spoke and did, he spoke and did by the power of the Holy Spirit. From his birth to the end of his life on earth, the Holy Spirit was upon him and with him. All this shows the intimate relationship between Jesus’ work of redemption and the Holy Spirit.

However, especially after Jesus had left the earth and ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit is intimately associated with Jesus and his redemptive work. When Jesus spoke to his disciples about his return to his Father, they were sad. Jesus comforted them with the message, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever”—John 14, verse 16. Jesus would leave them, and he would no longer be physically present with them. However, he

would not leave them comfortless, for another Comforter would come—a person who would always abide with them, and even dwell within them. Jesus promised, “He abides with you and will be in you”—John 14, verse 17. Jesus would remain with them through the Comforter. The Holy Spirit would take his place as another Comforter. Since, however, the Holy Spirit and Christ are one, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers would, in fact be, the indwelling of Christ himself in their hearts. That is why Jesus could promise, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”—John 14, verse 18. He would come to live within them by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the author of the great mystery of Christianity, of which we read in Colossians 1, verse 27: “Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Paul could therefore say, “Christ lives in me”—Galatians 2, verse 20. Jesus’ nearness through the Holy Spirit is even superior to his bodily presence. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, living in the Christian, is even a more intimate bond than his physical presence. The Holy Spirit is none other than Christ within us. He resides in the heart of the believer. What a glorious guest is the Holy Spirit! He makes Christ present in the heart.

The work of the Holy Spirit is far more comprehensive than we can briefly discuss here. Let us mention his most important works. The Holy Spirit is the author of the Holy Scriptures. The apostle writes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”—2 Timothy 3, verse 16. Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is, it is breathed by the Holy Spirit. Though the writers of the Bible are fallible people, whatever they have written, has been written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Two Peter 1, verse 21 reads: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Spirit is the author of all the spiritual gifts that believers possess. Of all the different spiritual graces that were present in the church at Corinth, the apostle says, “And all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit”—1 Corinthians 12, verse 11.

The Holy Spirit seals to the believer’s heart that he or she is a genuine Christian indeed. In Ephesians 1, verse 13, says the apostle, “In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” The presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers is the proof that they belong to Jesus. He unites them with Jesus. The Holy Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God. Romans 8, verse 16 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” He grants them the confidence to approach God as their loving Father. He leads believers: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”—Romans 8, verse 14. He is the pledge of our eternal inheritance: “Which is the earnest of our inheritance”—Ephesians 1, verse 14. His indwelling is the warranty of their blessed bodily resurrection: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you”—Romans 8, verse 11. The Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of all true believers: “Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you”—1 Corinthians 6, verse 19. The Holy Spirit is God within us. What a glorious guest! What a wonder that the Holy Spirit will reside in such sinful hearts as our hearts are!

Above all, however, the Holy Spirit is the person who will see to it that Christ’s redemptive work bears fruit. He brings the work of Jesus to full fruition and gathers to him a congregation, chosen to eternal life, of all generations, tongues, and nations. The Holy Scriptures focus preeminently on making sinners the partakers of the salvation Christ has merited. It is the most important aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has finished his redemptive work, and thereby has merited the rich, spiritual, and eternal blessings for his church. However, how do we become partakers of these blessings? The scriptural answer is: by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites the sinner with Christ, and thereby makes him a partaker of all Christ’s benefits.

Jesus spoke to his disciples about the work of the Holy Spirit, and told them what his ministry would be. He said, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you”—John 16, verses 13 and 14. Jesus said, “He shall glorify me.” These words sum up the core aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not set himself in the place of Christ.

He seeks not his own glory—this is evident sign of a false spirit, whatever it pretends to be. Of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “He shall not speak of himself.” He shall magnify and glorify Christ in the hearts of sinners, in order that they shall know what a blessed Savior and Redeemer Jesus is.

Jesus also taught how the Holy Spirit would accomplish this task. He said, “For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. Jesus speaks about receiving “of mine”—that is, all that belongs to Jesus, and thus everything Jesus has merited. The Holy Spirit will apply all this to the believers. He reveals to the souls of sinners the good things of the covenant of grace, which the Father has provided and the Son purchased. He shows to us mercy, grace, forgiveness, righteousness, acceptation with God, and he lets us know that Jesus has procured all these blessings for us.

He makes this not only known, but he grants us faith to embrace all this and make it our own. And so it will be fulfilled what Paul writes: “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”— 1 Corinthians 2, verse 12. Jesus identifies this as the great work of the Holy Spirit. He will make us the beneficiaries of Christ, and all that pertains to him. To this end, the Holy Spirit will unite us, by faith, to Christ, and everything that pertains to Jesus will thus become our portion. The blessings of Christ can thus not be divorced from Christ himself, and they are therefore not obtainable apart from our union with Christ. It is in and with Christ that the benefits of Christ are bestowed upon us. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, “But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” In Christ, believers are partakers of all these mercies. Just as all our misery proceeds from our union with Adam, likewise all our salvation proceeds from our union with Christ.