

The gift of the Holy Spirit is never completely taken away from true Christians, but he can be so grieved by their rebellions and backslidings, that for a season his presence is greatly withdrawn and his influences largely withheld (Ephesians 4:30). Therefore, it is the duty of all believers neither to grieve nor to quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

(Sola 5 Confession 6.8)

The Protestant Reformation was sparked by theological differences between the formal teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the biblical convictions of those within the church who discovered contrary truth in the Bible. A number of theological debates took place between Catholics and Protestants, but there was one Protestant doctrine in particular that invited the ire of the Catholic Church. This doctrine continues to be loathed by the Catholic establishment today. Consider these words, written by one Catholic theologian regarding the doctrine in question:

There is a doctrine so diabolical, so sinister and wicked that it deserves, in this author’s opinion, a unique claim to the name “The Devil’s Doctrine.” This teaching is sheer poison to the soul which embraces it. Like a spiritual AIDS, it kills the soul’s built-in immune system, the conscience, and it convicts the sinner in his sins and errors almost without hope of conversion. It either throws the sinner into a bottomless despair for his sins, or (more often today) it forces him into another sin against the virtue of hope: the deadly sin of presumption.

What is this “devil’s doctrine” that so endangers and kills the soul that embraces it? It is “none other than the familiar Calvinist one of ‘perseverance of the saints.’” In Catholic theology, assurance of salvation is impossible, or else there is no need for confession and penance. Simply put, Catholic theology formally teaches, contrary to our Confession, that the gift of the Holy Spirit CAN (and IS) taken from the Christian when he or she sins and must be restored through the act of confession and penance.

Reformed theology asserts that God preserves those whom he saves and the Spirit is the agent by which he preserves them. So what happens when a Christian, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sins? This is the subject of the Confession before us.

The Confession begins with a simple affirmation: **The gift of the Holy Spirit is never completely taken away from true Christians.** This statement is unsupported in this point of the Confession, in large measure because it has already been discussed elsewhere. Briefly, and having already learned what we have learned in the Confession, what scriptural proofs would you offer in support of this affirmation? _____

If it is true that the Holy Spirit will never be taken completely from true Christians, how do you process the testimony of those who once professed faith but have since abandoned that profession? _____

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the Spirit departing from certain people (Psalm 51:11; Judges 16:20; 1 Samuel 16:14; etc.)? _____

Though a Christian can never completely lose the Holy Spirit, **he can be so grieved by their rebellions and backslidings, that for a season his presence is greatly withdrawn and his influences largely withheld (Ephesians 4:30). Therefore, it is the duty of all believers neither to grieve nor to quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).**

The Confession talks of the Spirit being **grieved** and **quenched** through the believer’s **rebellions and backslidings**. There is much here that warrants discussion.

We would all agree that Christians sin. Therefore, when a professing Christian sins, we cannot automatically assume that that person is an unbeliever. Is it possible to know when a sinful action or lifestyle is evidence of actual unbelief, or should we always assume the best about a person’s profession despite the sin he or she commits? _____

The apostle John draws a distinction between sins that do not lead to death and sins that do lead to death (1 John 5:16–17). What is your understanding of this distinction? _____

Christians sin. Through their sin, Christians sometimes **grieve** (Ephesians 4:30) or **quench** (1 Thessalonians 5:19) the Holy Spirit. What does the New Testament mean by these terms?

Grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30): _____

Quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19): _____

Given the contexts of the two exhortations, are grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit the same thing, or should a distinction be made between the two. _____

What happens in a Christian’s life or a local church when a Spirit withdraws his presence and withholds his influence? _____
