

# Translators' Introduction

## The Third Sermon, on Easter Day

JAYSON S. GALLER AND SUSANNE HAFNER, TRANSLATORS



FOR LUTHERANS, HOLY SCRIPTURE IS the *norma normans* and the Confessions the *norma normata*, which both in turn serve to norm a present-day pastor's performance of his duties, especially his teaching and administration of the sacraments.<sup>1</sup> Normed by holy scripture, the Lutheran Confessions themselves give certain other writings of the reformers a confessional status of their own. For example, Solid Declaration VII, 91 directs those interested in a more detailed refutation of the sacramentarians' counterarguments to Martin Luther's *Against the Heavenly Prophets; That These Words "This Is My Body," Etc. Still Stand Firm*; the *Large and Small Confessions concerning the Holy Supper*; and other writings.<sup>2</sup> Most appropriately, then, these writings of Luther's have been available in English translations for years. Not until very recently, however, has Luther's so-called Torgau Sermon, which is given a comparable deuter-confessional status by Article IX of the Formula,<sup>3</sup> been widely available in English.

Volume 37 of the Weimar edition of Luther's works places the sermon in a section of "sermons of the year 1533" and titles it simply "The Third Sermon, on Easter Day."<sup>4</sup> The Formula of Concord refers to it as being preached that year at Torgau;<sup>5</sup> it is more likely, however, that it was preached at Wittenberg on Easter Day in 1532.<sup>6</sup> It was finally published as a treatment of the second article of the Apostolic Creed following two other sermons, one or both of which were preached at Torgau. Through this association it apparently became known as the "Torgau Sermon."<sup>7</sup>

David G. Truemper explicitly questions the degree of the sermon's authenticity. He calls the three sermons typical examples "of the redaction and transmission of Luther's sermons." According to Truemper, in 1533 "some unknown associate of Luther's prepared the sermon for publication—and inserted Rörer's transcript of the 1532 Easter sermon for the articles on the descent and the resurrection." Truemper's text criticism postulates three "traditions" of the sermon, concluding that there are "differences in what Luther is made to say about the descent."<sup>8</sup> Despite having completed his own accurate word-for-word translation of the published sermon,<sup>9</sup> Truemper now concludes that the printed sermon is "too much a departure from what Luther actually taught and preached" and therefore has not made available an English translation of something "Luther decidedly did *not* teach."<sup>10</sup>

Truemper, however, does not address several potential counter-arguments. First, although the sermon was published in Luther's own lifetime, there is no known objection by Luther to its content. In other cases when something was published in Luther's name with which he did not agree, he was quite explicit in his disapproval. Second, the authors of the Formula and others who personally knew Luther and may have heard the actual sermon take it in its entirety as genuine.<sup>11</sup> Third, regardless of whether the sermon or some of its content is pseudo-Luther, the Formula still gives it confessional status (as The Book of Concord does with other writings whose actual authors may not be who they were originally thought to be<sup>12</sup>). Fourth, other Luther works that Truemper cites authoritatively are subject to the same issues relative to transmission, as are the works of other authors.<sup>13</sup> Therefore it stands to reason that Luther was the author of the bulk of the published sermon's content and that, if not the author of every word, he at least gave the printed form his approval. Most importantly, we hope to demonstrate with this translation that the "Torgau Sermon," properly understood in its context, does not contradict Luther's doctrine.

More than on any one specific biblical text, Luther appears to be preaching on the Apostolic Creed, which Solid Declaration IX, 1 reiterates.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the sermon contains many biblical references, contrary to Martin Scharlemann's report that Luther only refers to Psalm 16 and alludes to Ephesians 4:8–9.<sup>15</sup> Rather, as David Scaer points out, the imagery of the stronger man binding the strong man and taking his possessions (Mt 12:22–32; Mk 3:22–30; Lk 11:14–23) permeates the sermon.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Luther himself cites many specific passages (Ps 16; Mt 16; Rom 8 [twice]; Gal 2; Eph 2; 1 Th 4), and the Weimar editors additionally note others (Nu 21:8 ff.; Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 15:20). Furthermore, this translation identifies even more clear allusions to biblical texts (Gn 3:15; Mt 6:21 or Lk 12:34; Lk 22:14; Mk 4:26–29; Rom 6:3–4; 11:36; 1 Co 2:7; 15:25, 27; 15:36–56; 2 Cor 5:1, 4; Col 2:11).<sup>17</sup>

Striking to modern preachers may be that Luther makes no apparent reference to 1 Peter 3, commonly regarded as a *sedes doctrinae* for Christ's descent.<sup>18</sup> This is not because Luther would not locate the descent there—he does so when commenting on 1 Peter. It rather may be due to the difficult nature of the passage, as Luther himself concedes: “*Der ist uns viel zu hoch, non intelligo.*”<sup>19</sup> Luther's first commentary on 1 Peter (1522 or 1523) is available in the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, but the second commentary (1539) is not.<sup>20</sup> Although Francis Pieper gives Luther's comments on 1 Peter 3 some dogmatic standing,<sup>21</sup> Luther's opinions in these commentaries do not carry the same authority as the “Torgau Sermon,” which is given confessional status by the Formula of Concord.

A more modern issue regarding the descent as presented in 1 Peter 3 centers on the interpretation of the dative *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* in 1 Peter 3:18. Pieper cites Luther in support of taking these terms as reflecting Christ's states of humiliation and exaltation, but he also notes that later Lutheran theologians differed.<sup>22</sup> As one might expect, Luther's commentaries on 1 Peter address this exegetical matter, but the sermon—and the Formula in its wake—do not. By referring to the descent's destruction of hell and redemption from death's power, however, both the

sermon and the Formula clearly consider the descent to be part of Christ's state of exaltation, what Epitome IX, 1 calls Christ's “glorious victory and triumph.”<sup>23</sup>

Since Truemper's thorough discussion of the descent in his 1973 doctoral dissertation,<sup>24</sup> two sizeable German works have taken up the issue of the descent. First, Heinz-Jürgen Vogel's *Christi Abstieg ins Totenreich und das Läuterungsgericht an den Toten* is a biblical and dogmatic *Unter-*

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*suchung* (examination) of the descent.<sup>25</sup> Vogel deals primarily with 1 Peter 3:19–20 and 1 Peter 4:6; he does not appear to take up Luther or the Formula at all. Second, Markwart Herzog's *Descensus ad Infernos* examines the topic of the descent in literature since the sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Herzog makes reference to Luther and his unwillingness to go beyond the simple words of the Creed and popular pictures, but takes a different approach himself and examines the descent from a philosophical viewpoint.<sup>27</sup>

There are various assertions that over time Luther changed his position regarding the descent.<sup>28</sup> Truemper denies such a material change over time, instead finding occasional changes in emphasis:

Luther's *descensus* theology is distinctive on several counts over against the medieval conception (and that of subsequent orthodoxy), that it is a multi-faceted view, that it is both paradoxical and self-consistent in its focus on the “theology of the cross,” . . . and that it always evidenced his concern for the Gospel and for the faith that trusts the Gospel.<sup>29</sup>

Truemper reaches this finding from what he calls a “fresh look” at various other works of Luther's on the descent,<sup>30</sup> privileging them over the “Torgau Sermon” in his search for Luther's “real” position.<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting again, however, the primacy of the “Torgau Sermon” and its deuterо-confessional status given by Article IX of the Formula of Concord. Formula IX is not the only place in the Confessions where the descent is mentioned.<sup>32</sup> Both the Apostolic Creed and the Athanasian Creed refer to it, as does Augsburg Confession Article III.<sup>33</sup> (The Confutation accepted Augsburg Confession III and itself mentioned the descent. For this reason, Apology III could leave the descent unmentioned.<sup>34</sup>) Scharlemann claims that the creedal words originally “probably did little more than emphasize the reality of Christ's death”<sup>35</sup>—an approach not unlike Calvin's, whom Scharlemann criticizes for regarding them “as a figurative expression of the truth that Christ suffered God's anger for us on the cross.”<sup>36</sup>

Such varying interpretations and understandings seem to have prompted the writers of the Formula to use Luther's sermon to address the descent in Article IX. Apparently there were disagreements in Wittenberg during Luther's lifetime.<sup>37</sup> Then, from 1544 to 1553, there was controversy between John Aepinus and his colleagues in Hamburg, a controversy even mentioned in the Imperial Instruction for the Diet at Augsburg.<sup>38</sup> In 1554, Jacob Thiele's view of the *descensus* was condemned by the Greifswald Synod.<sup>39</sup> In 1565 another controversy over the descent arose between John Matsperger of Augsburg and John Parsimonious of Stuttgart,<sup>40</sup> which may even have reached Württemberg and involved Jakob Andreae, one of the Formula's drafters.<sup>41</sup> Another factor for Article IX's

inclusion in the Formula may have been the Mansfeld ministerium's 1565 *Confessio et Sententia ministrorum verbi in comitatu Mansfeldensi, de dogmatis quorundam proximo triennio publice editios*. The *Confessio* refutes the *Heidelberg Catechism's* denial of the communication of attributes in its view of the descent.<sup>42</sup>

Despite claims to the contrary,<sup>43</sup> the sermon-based Formula did not permanently end such disputes about Christ's descent into hell.<sup>44</sup> Even today, Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson's *Christian Dogmatics*, presently used in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, see the descent both as part of the humiliation and as a declaration of victory that universalistically gives the dead a second chance at repentance and conversion.<sup>45</sup> Such a reading is just one indication of the enduring relevance of the sermon and the Formula based on it for the Church today.

Putting the Epitome's and Solid Declaration's versions of Formula IX side by side, one cannot help but notice the differences between the two. The Epitome introduces questions that had been the source of the controversy, refers to the sermon's emphasis on grasping the article by simple faith, and concludes that it is enough

to know that Christ descended into hell and redeemed believers from the power of death, devil, and hell.<sup>46</sup> The Solid Declaration, on the other hand, merely alludes to the different explanations of the article and refers to the Creed's simple statement. In the process, the Solid Declaration answers definitively some of the questions the Epitome left open. The main differences between the Epitome and Solid Declaration are these:

1. Ep details controversies; SD simply mentions their existence.
2. Ep appeals to Luther's sermon because of the way it explains the article; SD points to the simple statement in the Creed.
3. Ep leaves matters open; SD resolves three decisive points:
  - a. The chronology (by differentiating the descent from the burial and saying the descent took place afterward).
  - b. The subject (by stressing that the entire person of Christ, human and divine, accomplished the descent)-<sup>47</sup>
  - c. The triumphant manner of the descent.<sup>48</sup>

Truemper notes that the Epitome and Solid Declaration were "compromise documents" that "were drawn up by theologians who held almost contradictory conceptions."<sup>49</sup> He claims that the Epitome dominated in the early years following the Formula, and that later the Solid Declaration prevailed.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the two converge in the exhortation "that the 'heart and comfort' of the descensus be taught and believed as Luther had done."<sup>51</sup>

Though Luther does make some general references,<sup>52</sup> doctrinal disputes such as those that Formula IX addresses are not so clearly the target of the "Torgau Sermon." Quite the contrary, the sermon, and thus also to a great extent Formula IX, is concerned with putting aside such detailed questions about the descent, holding to the Apostolic Creed's simple statement of faith, and taking to heart the great comfort that Christ's victorious descent gives the believer.<sup>53</sup> Luther's earlier Resurrection hymn, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (1524), likewise emphasizes the victorious nature of the descent and its comfort for the believer.<sup>54</sup> The third stanza of the original especially refers to the triumphant nature of the descent:<sup>55</sup>

Jesus Christ, God's only Son,  
 Into our place descending,  
 Away with [all] our sins hath done,  
 And therewith from Death rending  
 Right and might, made him a jape,  
 Left him nothing but Death's shape:  
 His ancient sting—he has lost it. Alleluia!<sup>56</sup>

The victory is the believer's, as Luther emphasizes repeatedly in the latter half of the sermon, most concretely in holy baptism.<sup>57</sup> As noted above, this is in keeping with the Small Catechism's explanation of the second article

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of the Creed.<sup>58</sup> Likewise it is in keeping with the Catechism's answer to the second question regarding baptism: it "delivers from death and the devil."<sup>59</sup> This connection notably fits the baptismal context of 1 Peter 3 and its reference to Christ's descent, as well as the similar theme in Colossians 2:9–15.<sup>60</sup>

Neither the Tappert nor the Kolb-Wengert edition of *The Book of Concord* refers to the entirety of the sermon from WA 37: 62–72; both cite only pages 62–67 of the Weimar Edition.<sup>61</sup> This may be because *Die Bekenntnisschriften* themselves only cite and reproduce the first half of the sermon,<sup>62</sup> presumably the portion Jakob Andreae cites in his manuscript of Formula IX.<sup>63</sup> Yet the Formula itself does not limit its extension of confessional authority to the first half, though its references could be said to come primarily from this portion.<sup>64</sup> Nothing in the un-cited second half of the sermon contradicts the rule of faith of the confessions as a whole.

Until 2001, the only English text of the sermon was David G. Truemper's unpublished translation from February 1966, which remained widely unknown and to which there is no reference in the 2000 Kolb and Wengert edition of *The Book of Concord*.<sup>65</sup> In 2001 Robert Kolb also provided his own translation in his *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*.<sup>66</sup> Our translation endeavors to provide the occasional amendment as well as supplementary information in its introduction and ample annotations. It is based on WA 37: 62–72, which in turn is said to reproduce the 1533 printing, which Andreae partially cited.<sup>67</sup> This translation follows the paragraph structure of the Weimar edition, numbering the paragraphs for easy reference. Where specifically referring to the German, the translation refers to the Weimar edition, page(s), and line numbers. In addition to our comments on the sermon's biblical foundation and isagogical issues, we also hope to bring forth Martin Luther's outstanding humanistic education and brilliant rhetorical style.

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# The Third Sermon, on Easter Day

MARTIN LUTHER

Translated by Jayson S. Galler and Susanne Hafner



[1] As we now have buried the Lord Christ and have heard how he has departed from this life, we must also raise him up again and celebrate Easter Day, the day when he entered a second, new life, in which he can die no more, and has become a Lord over death and everything in heaven and earth.<sup>69</sup> This is also shown by this article, in which we say: “He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead.”<sup>70</sup>

[2]<sup>71</sup> Because before he rose again and ascended into heaven, still lying in the grave,<sup>72</sup> he also descended to hell, so that he set us free, too, who were to lie imprisoned therein.<sup>73</sup> This is also the reason why he died and was laid in the grave: that he might bring out his own. I do not want to treat this article in a high and mighty fashion, theorizing how it happened,<sup>74</sup> or what it means to descend to hell. Instead I want to remain with the simplest understanding of what these words mean, how one must explain them to children and the simple. For there have been many who have wanted to grasp the meaning with reason and their five senses,<sup>75</sup> but with that approach they have reached or achieved nothing, but instead only further digressed and strayed from the faith.<sup>76</sup> For that reason this method is the very safest for the person who wants to find the right way and not collide: let him stick only to the words and picture them in the simplest way, as best he can.

[3] Accordingly Christ is painted on the walls, descending with a cape and with a standard in his hand, reaching hell, and with it beating and driving out the devil, storming hell, and bringing out his own—just how the Easter Eve play portrays it for the children.<sup>77</sup> I like it that one has pictures, plays, songs, or stories for the simple. One should leave it like that and not be concerned with high, overly sophisticated thoughts,<sup>78</sup> wondering how it could have happened,<sup>79</sup> presuming that it had not taken place bodily inasmuch as he had remained in the grave the three days.<sup>80</sup>

[4] For however one<sup>81</sup> might like to talk about his substance in a sophisticated and subtle fashion, just as many teachers have had disputes about whether he descended personally and was present according to the soul or only working through his power and action, it cannot be grasped or fathomed intellectually, and these teachers themselves have not understood it. For if I am asked to spell out verbally or grasp with my senses his substance,<sup>82</sup> which

is above and beyond this life,<sup>83</sup> then I will refrain from that. For I cannot even reach everything that is of this life, as, for example, what the Lord Christ was thinking and feeling in the garden, where he meekly sweated blood,<sup>84</sup> but I must let it remain in word and faith.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, the way in which he has descended into hell can be grasped less with words or thoughts. But because we must grasp in thoughts and pictures that which is told us in words and cannot think or understand anything without a picture, it is meet and right<sup>86</sup> that one recognizes the word in the picture: Christ descending with the standard, breaking hell’s gates and destroying them. The high incomprehensible thoughts should be left alone.

[5] Therefore such a painting shows well the power and usefulness of this article, and why it is used, preached, and believed that Christ destroyed hell’s power and has taken all of the devil’s might.<sup>87</sup> When I have this, I have the right essence and understanding of it and should not ask or ponder again how it might have happened or have been possible, just as in other articles such pondering and mastering of the understanding is forbidden and cannot achieve anything.<sup>88</sup> Otherwise, if I also wanted to be as smart as some who proudly raise themselves above others and ridicule our simplicity, I could also jest and ask what he had for a standard, whether it was made from cloth or paper, and how it happened that it did not burn in hell. Also, what kind of gates and locks hell has etc.; and so just like a pagan, I could make fun of the Christians as the greatest fools that they believe such. That is an evil, easy art, which everybody knows well without any learning; even a sow or cow could do that. So I could also craft allegories and interpret with great skill what the standard and staff or cloth and hell’s gate signify.

[6] Because, God be praised, we are certainly not so crude as to believe or claim that it happened bodily<sup>89</sup> with external pomp or a wooden standard and cloth, or that hell is a wooden or iron building. But we leave all such questions, speculation, and explanation at home and speak simply so that one can grasp with such crude images what this article gives. This is the way one otherwise presents the teaching of divine matters through crude, external images, just as throughout the gospel Christ himself sheds light on the mystery of the kingdom of heaven for the people through clear pictures and parables, or one paints the child Jesus stepping on the head of the serpent.<sup>90</sup> And Moses sketches him for the Jews in the desert by means of the bronze serpent,<sup>91</sup> so also John the Baptizer by means of a lamb, because he calls him the Lamb of God.<sup>92</sup> For such pictures are bright and light, a means through

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which to grasp and understand, and in addition they are lovely and consoling. And moreover, even if they otherwise are no good, they serve to ward off the devil, with his dangerous arrows and attacks,<sup>93</sup> who wants to lead us away from the word with high thoughts,<sup>94</sup> so that we climb with reason<sup>95</sup> and split hairs in these high articles, until he finally throws us down.

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***Once the world hears that Christ descended into hell, it immediately wants to figure out how it happened.***

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[7] For without a doubt it has come down to us from the old fathers, who have reported and sung about it, just as the old songs resound, and we sing on Easter Day: “Who broke up hell and bound the accursed devil therein” etc.<sup>96</sup> Because when a child or simple person hears such, he thinks nothing else than that Christ has overcome the devil and taken all his power from him. This is a right and Christian thought, and on target of the right truth and meaning of this article, although it is not precisely to the point of what happened, nor does it express it. But what does it matter, if it does not spoil my faith for me and gives the right understanding, clear and bright, which I should and can grasp from it? And although I am looking long and hard, yet I cannot grasp more of it; instead I will lose my mind, if I do not hold on firm to the word,<sup>97</sup> where I am well taken care of.<sup>98</sup> But one must picture it for the crude people in a childlike and simple way as best one can. Otherwise one of two things follows: that either they do not learn or understand anything about it, or that they want to be smart and with reason attain to lofty thoughts,<sup>99</sup> and consequently lose their faith.<sup>100</sup>

[8] I speak about this because I see that the world now wants to be wise in the devil’s name and to master and get to the bottom of everything in these articles of faith as it sees fit. So here, once the world hears that Christ descended into hell, it immediately wants to figure out how it happened and raises many long-winded, useless questions:<sup>101</sup> whether the soul alone descended, or whether the Godhead was with it. Also, what he did there, and how he dealt with the devils, and many similar things, about which, however, it can know nothing. But we should leave such useless questions and fix and bind our poor simple hearts and thoughts onto the word of faith,<sup>102</sup> which says: “I believe in the Lord Christ, God’s Son, dead, buried and descended into hell.”<sup>103</sup> That is: in the whole person, God and man, with body and soul undivided, from the Virgin born, suffered, dead, and buried.<sup>104</sup> So I should not divide it here either, but believe and say that the selfsame Christ, God and man in one person, descended to hell,<sup>105</sup> but not to remain therein. This is what the sixteenth Psalm said about him: “For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.”<sup>106</sup> But he is called “soul” here according to Scriptural language, not like what we call souls, beings separated from bodies, but the whole person, as he calls himself the Holy One of God.

[9] But how it might have happened<sup>107</sup> that the man lies there in the grave and nevertheless descends into hell, that we should and must leave unquestioned and unanswered.<sup>108</sup> For it indeed did not happen bodily or tangibly,<sup>109</sup> although one must portray and think it crudely and bodily, and speak of it through parables, as if a strong hero or giant came to a firm castle with his army and standard and weapons and destroyed it and seized and bound the enemy therein, etc.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, if someone asks you about this article, simply say thus: How it happened,<sup>111</sup> that I indeed know not. I will also not imagine it, nor can I speak about it. But I can portray it for you and capture it in a picture crudely, in order to speak about mysterious matters in a clear and distinct manner: he has descended and taken the standard as a victorious hero and used it to break open the gates and cause such a stir among the devils, that here one fell out of a window, there one fell through a hole.

[10] So you come along, untimely sophist, with your soiled sophistry<sup>112</sup> and mock: “If it is true what I hear, that hell has a wooden door, made by a carpenter, how has it stood there for so long without burning, etc.?” Answer: “That I knew even before your sophistry was born, and you need not teach me that hell is not built of wood and stone, or that it has such doors and windows, locks or bolts like a house or castle on earth, and that he did not destroy it with a standard of cloth.” So I, too, can speak also about it as sharply as any such sophist, praise God, and I can also clarify all such pictures and figures and explain what they mean. But, I would rather remain in the childlike understanding and the simple, clear words that paint this article so well for me, than ascend with them into the high thoughts<sup>113</sup> that the sophists themselves do not understand and with which the devil leads them astray. For such a picture cannot harm or tempt me, but it serves and helps me to grasp and hold this article more strongly,<sup>114</sup> and the understanding remains pure and unperverted. (It is up to God, whether the gate, door, and standard be wooden or iron or nonexistent.) Just as we must grasp everything unfamiliar and unknown to us through pictures, whether they are correct or not, and whether the truth is accurately depicted. Accordingly, I believe that Christ himself personally destroyed hell and bound the devil. It is up to God, whether the standard, gate, door, and chain be wooden, iron, or nonexistent. This does not make a difference, if I only remember what has been demonstrated through such pictures, that is, what I should believe of Christ, which is the main point, use, and strength that derive from them: namely, that neither hell nor devil can take captive or harm me and everyone who believes in him.<sup>115</sup>

[11] This might be the simplest way of speaking about this article: that one holds on to the words and clings to this, the main point. That is, that through Christ hell is rent and the devil’s reign and power are destroyed for us, for whom he died, was buried, and descended. Because of him, they no longer can harm nor overpower us, as he himself says in Matthew the sixteenth chapter.<sup>116</sup> For although hell as such remains hell, and just like death, sin, and all kinds of misery, holds the unbelievers captive who must remain and perish therein, and although hell also frightens and constricts us according to our flesh and external nature so that we must battle and bite it, yet in faith and spirit all such is destroyed and torn so that it no longer can harm us.<sup>117</sup>

[12] All of this has been accomplished through this one man, our Lord Christ, descending into hell. Otherwise, the world with all its power would not have been able to save anyone from the devil's bonds, nor to take away hell's pain and power for a sin, even if all the saints were to go into hell for a person's sins. Everyone who has ever been born into the world would have had to remain in hell eternally, if the holy, almighty Son of God with his own Person had not descended there and through his divine might powerfully conquered and destroyed it. For no Carthusian's cowl, Franciscan's cincture, nor all the holiness of monks, nor all the world's power and might are able to extinguish even a little spark of hell's fire. This, however, does: that this man himself descends with his standard. All the devils must run and flee, as if to escape death and poison, and all hell with its fire puts itself out because of him. Thus no Christian need be afraid of it, and, when he descends,<sup>118</sup> no longer should suffer hell's pain, just as through Christ he also does not taste death, but through death and hell enters eternal life.

[13] But our Lord Christ did not leave it at dying and descending into hell (for that ultimately would not help us), but he has returned from death and hell, bringing back life and unlocking heaven. He publicly demonstrated his victory and triumph over death, devil, and hell by rising from the dead on the third day, according to this article. That is its goal and its best, in which we have everything. For it also contains all power, strength, and might, and whatever there is in heaven and earth.<sup>119</sup> For through his resurrection from death he has become a mighty Lord over death and everything that has the power of death or serves death. Death no longer can devour nor hold him; sin no longer can fall upon him or drive him to death; and the devil no longer can accuse him, nor the world or any creature torment him or harm him. All of these no longer can harm us, other than by serving death and hell as his beat cop and constable and by driving and delivering us to him. But whoever has escaped death and is delivered from its bonds so that it no longer can hold or restrict him has also escaped from everything else and is a lord over world, devil, rope, sword, fire, gallows, and every plague, which he can resist and offer defiance.

[14] But this glory belongs now to the Lord Christ alone, for he brought it about through his almighty, divine power, not for his own self, but for us poor, miserable people,<sup>120</sup> who must be eternal prisoners of death and the devil. For he himself previously was safe from death and all misery, and he did not have to die or descend into hell. But because he put himself into our flesh and blood and took upon himself all our sin, punishment, and misery, so he also has to help us out of them, so that he, too, can come to life again and also become a Lord over death bodily and according to his human nature, so that we, too, in him and through him may come at last from death and all misery.<sup>121</sup> Because of this, scripture calls him *Primo genitus ex mortuis*, "Firstborn from the dead,"<sup>122</sup> as the one who has cleared the path and gone before us to eternal life. Through his resurrection we, too, can pass through and thus gain a glorious victory over death and hell. We, who were hell's prisoners, not only are to be redeemed,<sup>123</sup> but will also become victors and lords through faith, by which we are also clothed in his resurrection and hereafter will all be resurrected and also raised up bodily and visibly, so that everything must lie under our feet for all eternity.<sup>124</sup>

[15] This requires a strong faith, which renders this article strong and good and inscribes with capital letters these words, "Christ is risen,"<sup>125</sup> into the heart and makes them as big as heaven and earth. Thus faith sees, hears, thinks or knows nothing other than this article, as if there were none other written in the whole creation. Faith so internalizes it that it is wholly immersed and lives for this article only. Saint Paul, as a right master of this article, has the habit of discussing and explaining it in this way. He always has both heart and mind full of Christ's resurrection, and he glosses with such ample words: "He hath quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places,"<sup>126</sup> in Ephesians the second chapter, etc. Also in Galatians the second chapter: "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."<sup>127</sup> And to the Romans in the eighth chapter: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again," etc.<sup>128</sup>

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***He was not resurrected for his own person, but that we are so attached to him that it applies to us, too.***

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[16] If we only believed this, we would have a good life and death. For such faith would teach us well that he was not resurrected for his own person, but that we are so attached to him that it applies to us, too, and we, too, are set and incorporated in the *Resurrexit*.<sup>129</sup> For it and through it we also must rise again and live with him in eternity.<sup>130</sup> Thus our resurrection and life have started in Christ already (as Saint Paul also says).<sup>131</sup> This is so certain, as if it had already happened, without still being concealed or not yet revealed,<sup>132</sup> and we should henceforth look closely at this article, so that all other views are nothing in comparison, as if you saw nothing else in all of heaven and earth. Therefore, whenever you see a Christian die and be buried and you see nothing other than a cadaver lying there, completely dead for both eyes and ears, through faith you see another picture beyond the picture of this corpse, as if you did not see a grave and cadaver, but plenty of life and a beautiful, pleasing garden or a green meadow and therein plenty of new, living, joyous people.

[17] For if it is true that Christ is resurrected from death, then we already have received the best portion and most prominent part of the resurrection, in comparison to which the bodily resurrection of the flesh from the grave (which is still imminent) is to be considered minor. For what are we and all the world in comparison to Christ our head? What is a tiny drop of water to the sea or a little speck of dust to a great mountain? Christ, the head of Christendom (through whom it lives and has everything), who is so big that he fills heaven and earth,<sup>133</sup> is risen from the grave and thus has become a mighty Lord of all things, also of death and hell, as we have heard. Because of this, we, as his limbs, must also enjoy the benefits of his resurrection and share his very achieve-

ments, which he accomplished for our sake. Just as he through his resurrection has taken everything with himself, that both heaven and earth, sun and moon must become new, so he also will take us with himself, as Saint Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 and in Romans 8.<sup>134</sup> The same God who has resurrected Christ from the dead will also make our mortal bodies alive again. With us all creatures, which now are subject to corruption, and anxiously yearn after our glory, also will become free from the transitory nature and become glorious.<sup>135</sup> So, as we already have more than half of our resurrection, because the head and heart are already above, only the minor remainder is left to do, which is burying the body beneath the ground, so that it also might become renewed. For where the head resides, there the body must follow, too, as we see from all the animals, when they are born into this life.<sup>136</sup>

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***One half has already happened, indeed, far more than half, namely, that we are already spiritually resurrected through baptism in faith, and that is our best part.***

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[18] Furthermore, one half has already happened, indeed, far more than half, namely, that we are already spiritually resurrected through baptism in faith, and that is our best part. So, not only bodily the very best has happened, that is, our head is gone from the grave to heaven, but also according to the spiritual nature our soul has its part and is with Christ in heaven (as Saint Paul tends to say). The husks and shells or shards alone remain here below, but because of the head they must also rise. For this body is, as Saint Paul says, only a hut of the soul, as if made from earth or clay, and worn-out garment or an old ragged pelt.<sup>137</sup> But because through faith the soul is already in a new, eternal, heavenly life and cannot die or be buried, we do not have to wait any longer for this poor hut and the old pelt to become new and to not perish any more, because the best part is above and cannot leave us behind. As he who is called *Resurrexit* is gone from death and the grave, so must he who says, “*Credo*,” and is attached to him<sup>138</sup> also follow. For he led the way for us, so that we should follow there, and he has already begun this, as we are daily resurrected in him through the word and baptism.<sup>139</sup>

[19] Behold, we should therefore get used to such thoughts of faith against an external, bodily view of the flesh, which vain death places before our eyes. It wants to frighten us with such a picture and to create doubts about the article of the resurrection and to disturb it. For it is a blow to the head,<sup>140</sup> when one allows reason<sup>141</sup> with its thoughts to follow the eyes and does not wield the word<sup>142</sup> to counter reason in the heart. For one can have nothing other than thoughts of a vain death, seeing the body lie there more pitiful and more horrible than a dead corpse, so disgracefully rotting and stinking that no one on the earth can bear it. It cannot be remedied or prevented with any medicine, other than cremating it or burying it in the ground as deep as one can.

[20] But when you hold the word in faith,<sup>143</sup> you receive a different sense of vision<sup>144</sup> that can see through this death into the resurrection and seize many thoughts and pictures of life. For this is indeed a part of the resurrection and beginning of the new life, which also creates new senses<sup>145</sup> and thoughts. Those no one could have who has not already crossed over through faith and grasped the resurrection and therefore also pulled the outer person along, so that he would think and live accordingly.<sup>146</sup> Therefore he can conclude and proclaim against all human nature and intelligence: “If I want to judge according to reason<sup>147</sup> what I see and understand, then I am lost, but I have a higher understanding than what the eyes see and the senses feel,<sup>148</sup> which faith teaches me.<sup>149</sup> For there stands the text: He is called *Resurrexit*, ‘He has risen,’ and not for himself, but for our sakes, that his resurrection is ours and we in him are also resurrected and should not remain in the grave and death, but with him also bodily celebrate an eternal Easter Day.”

[21] For observe the farmer, who sows on the field and throws the grain away onto the earth, so that it must rot and spoil and seems to be completely lost. Afterwards, he does not take care of it, as if that were in vain; he even forgets all about the grain, nor does he wonder how it is doing, whether the worms eat it or it otherwise spoils. Rather, he goes away thinking that, around Easter or Pentecost, beautiful blades will come out and bring many more heads and kernels than he has thrown down. If somebody else who has not seen grain grown before sees that, he would certainly say to the farmer: “What are you doing, you fool? Are you not completely crazy and foolish, uselessly spilling your grain in the earth where it cannot help but decompose and rot without coming to use for anyone?” But when you ask the farmer, he will answer you much differently and say: “My dear, I already knew, even before you, that I should not needlessly throw away the grain; but I did not do it in order to let it spoil, but that, by decomposing in the earth, it might be transformed and bring much fruit.” This is the way everyone thinks who sees or does such, for we are not judging according to what we see before our eyes, but by seeing and experiencing God’s work annually. Yet we are not able to know or understand how it happens; much less are we able to bring a little blade from the earth by virtue of our own power.<sup>150</sup>

[22] Now because we must act in this way in such an earthly matter,<sup>151</sup> all the more should we learn such in this article (which we much less can grasp and understand), because we have God’s word<sup>152</sup> and, in addition, the experience that Christ is resurrected from death. We should not judge according to what we see before our eyes,<sup>153</sup> how we bury our bodies, burnt or otherwise turned to earth.<sup>154</sup> But we should leave it to God to take care of what should become of it. For if we were to see it before our eyes immediately, we would not have to believe anything, and God would not have the opportunity to show his wisdom and power over our wisdom and understanding. For this reason, we call it the art and wisdom of the Christian, that in howling and wailing one can create consoling and happy thoughts about life, in this instance that God has us buried in the earth and rotting during the winter, so that, come the summer, we should rise again much more handsome than this sun; as though the grave were not a grave, but a nice herb garden, wherein nice carnations and roses are planted, so that come the dear summer these should green and bloom, just as the tomb of

the Lord Christ had to be empty and not putrid, but also become tangibly beautiful and handsome.<sup>155</sup>

[23] The dear holy martyrs and virgins have spoken and thought the same way as they were led into prison and to their deaths. One reads that Saint Agatha made believe that she was going dancing and that she considered every torture and pain with which she was threatened to be nothing else than a tune whistled so she could dance.<sup>156</sup> Likewise, it is written about Saint Vincent<sup>157</sup> and others that they gladly and laughingly went to their deaths mocking their judges and hangmen. For they have a much firmer picture of the Resurrection than the farmer has of his harvest in the field, and they hold on to it with such certainty that they consider hangman, death, and devil a mockery in comparison.

[24] Let us learn this, too, so that we can pound the article into our hearts and well comfort ourselves and be able to resist the devil's sharpening his spear to use against us and threatening us with death and hell. For (as I have said) because our head, to which everything is attached,<sup>158</sup> is resurrected and lives, and we are baptized in him, we have already achieved far more than half; and only a small part remains, which is to shed our old skin completely, so that it also be renewed.<sup>159</sup> For as the whole inheritance is already ours, the husks and shells are sure to follow.<sup>160</sup>

[25] Let this be enough preaching at this time, based on this article about our Lord Jesus Christ. It has become evident how all wisdom and art that a Christian should know is enclosed and understood therein. This is a high wisdom above all wisdom and art indeed, but not one made on earth nor created in our heads, but revealed from heaven, and called a divine, spiritual wisdom and one hidden *in mysterio* (as Saint Paul says<sup>161</sup>). For reason<sup>162</sup> and the

world by themselves cannot attain or comprehend or understand any of the parts, although presented to them. They, however, only argue against and become annoyed at such teaching, and consider it to be an utterly great folly. It is as if God with his word were reduced to their fool, yes, even their liar. According to them, what he says and teaches must all be called damned and the worst heresy and temptation of the devil. This we now have come to experience and suffer from our own people, although we teach nothing else than this text, which they themselves sing and say with us daily. And there is no other reason for them to call us heretics, other than that we pound and praise so clearly and powerfully the article of the Lord Jesus Christ: he alone is and means everything that we have and from which we call ourselves Christians and want to know no other Lord, righteousness, or holiness. But this happens to us as a great comfort, because we are certain that we are being persecuted about no other thing on the earth than about the Lord Christ and the faith, which we have received from the apostles and which has been going into all the world and has remained therein. That is our sin and heresy before the world, but it is our defiance, praise, and joy before God with all the saints from the beginning of Christianity. Let us remain with this and study only this art daily. For this is the source of all our wisdom, salvation, and blessedness: where this article remains, therein everything remains, of which we are certain and have a righteous judgment, so that we can speak about every other teaching and life. On the other hand, if this part is struck down, then all of our salvation and comfort and wisdom is struck down, so that no one is able to judge correctly any longer, either about teaching or about life. May God help us through his same dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, praised in eternity. Amen. **LOGIA**

## NOTES

1 See the ordination rites in *The Lutheran Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), 107; *Lutheran Worship: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 212.

2. This is reiterated in SD VIII, 3. See Kolb-Wengert, 609, 616. Compare Tappert, 585, 592.

3. See FC Ep IX, 3; SD IX, 1; Tappert, 492, 610; Kolb-Wengert, 514, 635.

4. WA, 37: 62.

5. FC Ep IX, 3; SD IX, 1; Tappert, 492, 610; Kolb-Wengert, 514, 635.

6. Georg Röer's notes from the 1532 Wittenberg sermon (WA 36: 159–64) display so many similarities in organization and emphasis that David G. Truemper concludes that there is "little doubt that we have precisely the same sermon" (David G. Truemper, *The Descensus ad Infernos from Luther to the Formula of Concord* [Doctor of Sacred Theology Thesis, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1974], 101; hereafter referred to as *Descensus ad Infernos*). The dissertation focuses on "developments in Luther and the theologians of the Augsburg Confession, that is, on the development of the understanding of this doctrine within Lutheranism" (1). In the end, it calls "for a fresh reading of the Formula's way of focusing on the evangelical heart of the doctrine and dismissing much of the rest as 'useless questions'" (319).

7. Various factors go into this conclusion, including issues of dating on the published sermon and evidence as to where Luther was at the times in question. See and compare the various theories in WA 37: xxi; Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 95–104; and *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 245. (Hereafter references will be to Kolb.) The other two sermons in the series precede the sermon on the descent in WA 37, on pages 35–72.

The connection of the descent with the second article of the creed is not surprising. Luther's 1529 Small Catechism also explains the second article of the Creed by referring to Christ's victorious descent redeeming, delivering, and freeing "[me] from the power of the devil" (SC II, 4; Tappert, 345). Compare David Scaer, "He Did Descend to Hell: In Defense of the Apostles' Creed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, vol. 1 (March 1992): 98.

8. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 100–104. Truemper draws in part on Erich Vogelsang's "Luthers Torgauer Predigt von Jesu Christo vom Jahre 1532" (*Luther-*

*Jahrbuch* XII [1931]: 114–130. The third "tradition" of the 1532 Easter sermon is said to be Poach's *House-Postil* (*Dr. Martin Luther's sämtliche Werke* [Erlangen: Carl Heyder, 1826], v, 1–17).

9. David G. Truemper, "Concerning Jesus Christ: A Sermon Preached at the Court in Torgau," 1966. The translation was for A. C. Piepkorn's course "Luther and the Lutheran Symbols" at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1966. (Hereafter referred to as "Concerning Jesus Christ.")

10. Truemper, personal e-mail to Jayson S. Galler, 19 June 2002.

11. Compare Truemper's own documentation of the use made of it by others: George of Anhalt, Melancthon, Melancthon with Bugenhagen, etc. (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 167, 206–207, 239, respectively). Compare also Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, vol. 1, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 249.

12. For example, Pseudo-Ambrose (AC VI, 3; xx, 14, 30; xxiv, 33); see also references to Pseudo-Augustine, Pseudo-Basil, Pseudo-Clement, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Pseudo-Jerome (Tappert, 702).

13. On the latter, see, for example, Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 301.

14. Compare also Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 108 #2.

15. Martin Scharlemann, "He Descended into Hell: An Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18–20," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 27, no. 2 (February 1956): 84. It is not clear where in the sermon Scharlemann sees the allusion to Ephesians 4:8, 9. Truemper notes that Psalm 16:10 is the only explicit reference to scripture in the Röer version of the sermon (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 106). Scharlemann cites Luther's sermon from the St. Louis edition, *D. Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften*, herausgegeben von Dr. J. G. Walch, ed. A. Hoppe, 24 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880–1910), 10: 1125–1132.

16. David P. Scaer, *Christology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 6, ed. Robert D. Preus (Fort Wayne, IN: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989), 84. For example, see below, n. 110.

17. F. Bente, in *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 192, claims that Luther cites Acts 2:24, 27, but Luther does not make this explicit reference. These verses are themselves simply Peter's references to Psalm 16 in his Pentecost sermon.

18. Truemper traces how this passage's reference to the descent was ruled out

by Augustine, then connected to the descent from time to time by various figures, and only much later came to be widely used. See, for example, Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 19.

19. "He is much too difficult for us; I do not understand it" (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 132, n. 111, citing WA 46: 310, 6–7, which is Luther's sermon on Easter Saturday 1538). Note well that Luther restates his consternation macaronically: neither is the German-speaking Christian in him able to grasp the Holy Spirit's high thoughts, nor is the Latinate humanist. Scharlemann points out that Georg Stoeckhardt once called the passage a *locus vexatissimus* ("a most vexing passage") (Scharlemann, 86, citing Stoeckhardt's *Petribrief* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1912], 149).

20. AE 30: 1–145. Scharlemann cites the first commentary from the St. Louis edition 9: 958–1110, and the second commentary, similarly from 9: 1110–1297 (see Scharlemann, 86, 94 n. 11). The WA citation is 12: 259–399 for the 1523 edition; the second appears to be primarily a republication of the first (see WA 12: 249).

21. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. and ed. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 2: 318–320. The comments Pieper cites are apparently those from 1539, based on the St. Louis edition citation in n. 54, though they do not seem to be that different from the earlier ones translated in AE 30: 111–112.

22. Pieper, 2: 318. (There is no specific Luther citation at that place, though Pieper later refers to Luther's 1539 commentary.) As to the later theologians, see for example Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 203, where "in the flesh" is taken as referring to Christ's human nature.

23. Tappert, 492; compare Kolb-Wengert, 514.

24. The dissertation is self-admittedly limited in focus, and more conservative readers may object to some of Truemper's presuppositions, such as Ephesians' being deuterio-Pauline (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 10, n. 3).

25. Heinz-Jürgen Vogel, *Christi Abstieg ins Totenreich und das Läuterungsgericht an den Toten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976).

26. Markwart Herzog, *Descensus ad Infernos* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1997).

27. See Herzog, 9 (where he cites WA 46: 307, the 1538 Holy Saturday sermon), 10 (where he cites WA 37: 63, the sermon in question, and 46: 308, the 1538 Holy Saturday sermon again), and 55 (where he cites Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 144–146).

28. Scharlemann details a shift in Luther's position regarding the nature of Christ's activities during the descent (91). Kolb and Wengert assert that Luther also changed his position on the question whether the descent itself completed Christ's suffering (Kolb-Wengert, 634 n. 305). Truemper documents others who make similar claims, including Paul Althaus, although critically (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 92–94, 104 and n. 36). See also Elert, 249.

29. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 94–95. See also 151.

30. *Ibid.*, 91. Included are other sermons, lectures, and writings (95). Along with the two other versions of the sermon in question is a sermon from Easter Saturday 1538, found in WA 46: 298–313 (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 104).

31. For example, he concludes there was biased editing of the sermon (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 318).

32. See David Scaer, "Worship Supplement: A Few Notes on Translating the Creed," *Springfielder* 33, no. 4 (March 1970): 60.

33. Tappert, 18, 20, 30; Kolb-Wengert, 22, 25, 38, 39.

34. J. M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n. d., reprint), 350. Compare also Kolb, 108.

35. Scharlemann, 82.

36. *Ibid.*, 83. Scaer likewise details various interpretations of the creedal words and understandings of the descent. See David Scaer, "He Went to the Dead," *Springfielder* 33, no. 3 (December 1969): 35; "He Did Descend," 92 ff.; and *Christology*, 83–84.

37. Kolb, 245.

38. Bente, 103, 192–195; Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 218–271. Truemper dates the controversy from 1549 to 1551. He makes use of then-new information regarding the Hamburg controversy (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 2, 221, 229–233), an edition of which is forthcoming (Truemper, e-mail to Jayson S. Galler, 3 October 2002). For the relationship between Luther and Aepinus, see Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 219–220, 261–270. See also Elert, 249.

39. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 272–276. In 1577 the Greifswald Synod without comment approved the Torgau Book, a precursor to the Formula of Concord.

40. Noteworthy about this controversy, as Truemper details, is that Matsperger's theology, which claimed to be based on Luther's teachings, did not carry the day, but later did come to dominate Lutheran orthodoxy in the seventeenth century (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 277–291).

41. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 290; Kolb-Wengert, 634 n. 305.

42. Kolb-Wengert, 634–635, n. 305; Kolb, 245.

43. See Bente, 195, apparently quoting Paul Tschackert, *Die Entsehung der lutherischen und der reformierten Kirchenlehre: samt ihren innerprotestantischen Gegensätzen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1910), 559.

44. Indeed, as Truemper repeatedly notes, each of the three controversies he details ended with non-theological solutions (see, for example, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 301, 311, 316–317).

45. Carl E. Braaten, and Robert W. Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 548–549.

46. Compare Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 296.

47. It is clear from the "Torgau Sermon" that Luther holds Christ's human nature to have *made* the descent (paragraphs 8–9), although he also says that Christ's body remained in the tomb *during* the descent (see, for example, paragraph 2 and the note there). While this may be troubling for some at first, it is easier to posit such *multiple presences* of the human nature (as with the session at the right hand and the simultaneous sacramental union) than it is to imagine a separation of the human and divine natures after the incarnation. The body's remaining in the tomb would also seem to go against the notion that the tomb was empty prior to the completion of the Triduum. The body's remaining in the tomb during the descent does not imply, as the Reformed argue, that the stone had to be rolled back on Sunday morning to release Christ from the tomb. Rather, the stone was rolled back to reveal the by-that-point empty tomb. The descent into hell reveals to the netherworld what the empty tomb reveals to three Marys: Christ's triumph over death, hell, and the power of the devil. See Scaer, *Christology*, 86, 88, and below, n. 123.

48. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 297–299. Later Lutheranism would even go so far as to say the descent must be predicated *only* of the human nature, since the divine nature is everywhere already (Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3rd. ed. rev., trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1899], 379 #23).

49. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 300.

50. See, for example, Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 307–308, 319.

51. Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 319.

52. See, for example, paragraph 4 (WA 37: 63, 15).

53. For examples, see paragraphs 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. Compare the conclusion to Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 313, 318–319.

54. AE 53: 255–257. See the five-stanza version in *TLH* #195, *LBW* #134, *LW* #123; *CW* #161 drops the sacramental verse the others contain; and *LHy* #343 alone contains all seven stanzas. Death's strong bands holding Christ are to be figuratively located *on the cross or in the grave*, and *not* in hell, as the descent is not a continuation of Christ's suffering. Along this same line, there is a problem with the more literal sequence of *LW* #271: 3, lines 1–2: "Down in the realm of darkness / He lay, a captive bound," which does not translate the Latin *infernum penetrat* ("he penetrates or passes through hell").

55. Scaer also takes note of the reference to the confrontation between good and evil in Luther's "Ein feste Burg," "A Mighty Fortress" ("He Did Descend," 97).

56. AE 53: 257; WA 35: 443–445.

57. There is an allusion to baptism in paragraph 16 and specific references in paragraphs 18 and 24.

58. SC II, 4; Tappert, 345; Kolb-Wengert, 355.

59. SC IV, 6; Tappert, 348–349; Kolb-Wengert, 359.

60. See also Scaer, "He Did Descend," 93.

61. Tappert, 492, n. 4, 610, n. 6; Kolb-Wengert, 514, n. 70, 635, n. 306.

62. *BSLK*, 1049–1053.

63. Kolb, 245–246. In the Torgau book the article on the descent was initially more of an appendix to the preceding article on Christology. It was revised and shortened to omit the extended quote from the sermon because the overall book was getting too long (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 294–295; compare Kolb, 245).

64. The *BSLK* version of the sermon ends midway through paragraph 13 (as noted below), and there are only a few possible allusions to the sermon after that point, and not to anything that is not previously mentioned.

65. Kolb-Wengert, 514–515, 634–635.

66. Kolb, 245–255.

67. *Ibid.*, 246.

68. WA 37: 62–67. See the introduction for information on the sermon's date and place of preaching, as well as its publication. We gratefully acknowledge the helpful review of this translation by Dr. Katherine Arens, Linda Bethke, the Rev. Dr. Gerald Krispin, and John Sander, and we gratefully acknowledge the provision of another unpublished translation for comparison by Dr. Elmer M. Hohle.

69. Truemper discusses whether these words must mean that the sermon was actually preached in connection with an Easter service or whether they could indicate a connection to the previous articles in the creed in a series of sermons on the second article at some time other than the Easter season (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 98–99).

70. This statement from the Apostolic Creed is translated here according to modern-day usage (*TLH*, 12).

71. The sermon as copied in Jakob Andreae's notes in the margin of his draft of Formula of Concord Article IX begins here. See BSLK, 1050.

72. "noch im Grabe lag"; see below, paragraphs 8–9, for the problem with the descent happening bodily and its chronology. If Luther is saying it did *not* happen bodily, then the Solid Declaration, which says it did, perhaps intentionally uses a different way of referring to the sermon than the Epitome (see the Introduction and Truemper's dissertation's observation of the tensions between the two sections of the Formula).

73. Ep IX, 4: Dann es ist genug, daß wir wissen, daß Christus in die Helle gefahren, die Helle allen Gläubigen zerstöret und sie aus dem Gewalt des Todes, Teufels, ewiger Verdammnis des hellischen Rachens erlöset habe" (BSLK, 813).

74. SD IX, 3 begins "Wie aber sollichis zugegangen" (BSLK, 1053). Compare below: paragraphs 3 (WA 37: 63, 11), 5 (WA 37: 63, 34), 8 (WA 37: 64, 39–40), and 9 (WA 37: 65, 13, 20).

75. SD IX, 3 quotes "mit Vernunft und fünf Sinnen" (BSLK, 1053). On reason, see also below paragraphs 6 (WA 37: 64, 18), 19 (WA 37: 69, 27), 20 (WA 37: 69, 41), and 25 (WA 37: 71, 26). On the senses, see also below paragraphs 4 (WA 37: 63, 19) and 20 (WA 37: 69, 36, 42).

76. Alluded to by FC; see Ep IX, 2: "Nachdem aber dieser Artikel, wie auch der vorgehende, nicht mit den Sinnen noch mit der Vernunft begriffen werden kann, sondern muß allein mit dem Glauben gefaßt werden" (BSLK, 813).

77. *Osterspiele* were very popular in Germany at that time. An example of such an Easter play is *Das Osterspiel von Muri*, which features such scenes. For further information see *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 7, ed. Kurt Ruh, et. al. (Walter de Gruyter: New York, 1989), 119–125. See also Truemper's dissertation for discussion of dramatic portrayals of the descent and Lutheran restraint of such (59–69).

78. SD IX, 3 quotes "mit hohen, spitzigen Gedanken nicht bekümmern" (BSLK, 1053). Compare below paragraphs 4 (WA 37: 63, 29), 6 (WA 37: 64, 17), 7 (WA 37: 64, 35), and 10 (WA 37: 65, 37).

79. See above, n. 74.

80. "Und sols auch da bey bleiben lassen, das man nicht viel mit hohen, spitzigen gedanken sich bekomere, wie es möge zu gangen sein, weil es ja nicht leiblich geschehen ist, sintemal er die drey tage ia im grabe ist blieben." Luther is mockingly assuming the voice of the "overly-sophisticated thinker." He does not want to deny the bodily descent because Christ remained in the grave for three days. Kolb splits Luther's one German sentence into two English sentences, however, and thus renders Luther's indirect speech as an indicative statement (246). Truemper as well misses Luther's parodistic intent (Truemper, "Concerning Jesus Christ," 2). For similar problems with the issue of the bodily descent, see also below paragraphs 6 (WA 37: 64, 3–5) and 9 (WA 37: 65, 15).

81. Luther distances himself from those who would talk in this "sophisticated and subtle fashion." Kolb changes the third person singular to the first person plural and thus includes Luther in the group of teachers who have pointless disputes (Kolb, 247).

82. See above, n. 75.

83. Kolb's translation puts Luther's ability of perception, not the substance of Christ, far and above this life (Kolb, 247). We concur with Truemper's translation, which has the being (Christ) far above and beyond this life (Truemper, "Concerning Jesus Christ," 2). See Truemper's dissertation for a more detailed discussion of this text and what follows and later elaborations (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 109–111).

84. Luther's term is *mildiglich*. The reference appears to be to Luke 22:44, where the KJV says Christ's sweat "was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," which seems to have influenced both Kolb's and Truemper's translations. In a number of places, Truemper also takes up this relationship of the garden experience to the descent (for examples, Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 47, 109–111, 116, 132–133).

85. "Sondern mus es im wort und glauben bleiben lassen." Truemper translates this as "in the Word and in the Creed" (Truemper, "Concerning Jesus Christ," 2).

86. This may be an allusion to the rite of the Mass. Compare *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg* (1523), WA 12: 205–220 (see specifically AE 53: 27). See also Truemper's discussion of the Preface and Eucharistic Prayer as a "locus for descensus theology" (Truemper, *Descensus ad Infernos*, 55–57).

87. FC SD IX, 2: "den Teufel überwunden, der Hellen Gewalt zerstöret und dem Teufel all sein Macht genummen habe" (BSLK, 1053).

88. Ep IX, 4: "Wie aber solches zugegangen, sollen wir sparen bis in die andere Welt, da uns nicht allein dies Stück. Sondern auch noch anders mehr geoffenbaret, das wir hie einfältig geglaubt und mit unser blinden Vernunft nicht begreifen können" (BSLK, 813).

89. Luther's use of *leiblich* does not deny Christ's bodily descent per se, but takes issue with the "external pomp," as the prepositional phrase makes clear. Compare above, paragraph 3 (WA 37: 63, 12–13); and below, paragraph 9 (WA 37: 65, 15).

90. This seems to be a reference to Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and

thou shalt bruise his heel." (This and all biblical citations, unless otherwise noted, are from KJV).

91. The WA editors put 4 Moses (Numbers) 21:8 ff. in the margin, which is a reference to the bronze serpent raised in the wilderness. Kolb's translation seems to miss the mark: "Moses is depicted in the wilderness with a bronze serpent" (Kolb, 248). Rather, Moses depicts *Christ* (in) with a bronze serpent. Truemper's translation concurs with that offered in the text: "Moses portrayed Him to the Jews in the wilderness by means of the brass serpent" (Truemper, "Concerning Jesus Christ," 4). Luther's use of *Ehrne* is intriguing. In the Hebrew original of Numbers 21:6–9 there are several references to שָׂרָף (*nachash*, "serpent"), שָׂרָף (saraph, "venomous serpent," possibly from the burning effect of its poison or its reddish color), and נְחֹשֶׁת (nechosheth, "copper," likely made from ore and hardened with an alloy such as tin to make bronze to be worked by an artificer, possibly chosen because of its finished color in the sun) (see *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979], 638 and 977, and C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprint 1986], 1: 139–140). In v. 6 both words for *serpent* are used, *saraph* either as an appositive or adjective. In v. 7 the people refer to the serpents only as *nachash*, and in v. 8 God refers to the serpent that is to be made as *saraph*. In v. 9 Moses makes a *nechosheth* version of a *nachash*, so that if anyone is bitten by a *nachash* he may look at the *nechosheth* version of the *nachash* and live. The Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament in use in New Testament times, uses only ὄφεις for the snakes and two words to modify it, in v. 6 θανατοῦ-τας (essentially "deadly") and in v. 9 χαλκοῦν (made of copper, brass, or bronze). The Vulgate uses *serpentes* throughout, in v. 6 adding *ignitos* (apparently fiery, burning, or glowing) and in v. 9 *aeneum* (made of copper or bronze). In his Bible, Luther uses *Schlangen* consistently for the serpents. He does not have a modifier in v. 6, but he adds *eherne* in v. 8 and uses it again in v. 9. While today it may have more the sense of "iron," it can also mean "of brass, bronze, brazen" (*Cassell's German-English Dictionary*, rev. Harold T. Betteridge [New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1978], 165). Modern English translations vary between "serpents" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NEB) and "snakes" (NIV, Beck, NEB); between "fiery" (KJV, ASV, NASB [all three add it in v. 8]), "venomous" (NIV), and "poisonous" (Beck, NEB); and between "of brass" (KJV, ASV) and "bronze" (NIV, NASB, Beck, NEB).

92. In the margin, the Weimar edition refers to John 1:29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is Christ who is depicted as *Agnus Dei*. Kolb conflates John and the lamb: "Another example is John the Baptist being depicted as a lamb since he called Jesus the Lamb of God" (Kolb, 248).

93. *Anfechtungen*, strictly speaking, are "temptations" (compare Kolb, 248). Translating them as "attacks" here is in line with Luther's consistent use of battle imagery.

94. See above, n. 78.

95. See above, n. 75.

96. Kolb (248 n.9) cites *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*: *Cantiones Bohemicae*, ed. Guido Maria Deves (Leipzig: Fues, 1886), 99, #65. This reference is to a Latin hymn that begins "Christus surrexit" and that has a second stanza that includes the line "*Infernum vestavit*," but the German line Luther quotes does not seem to be a translation or paraphrase of this particular hymn.

Truemper's dissertation identifies this line (he quotes it from Rörer's notes) as being from "Also heilig ist der Tag," which he claims is the German version of "Salve festa dies," but he provides no sources for the identification, the German version, or the Latin hymn (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 107, n. 44). He does, however, have a helpful discussion of hymns and their understanding of the descent (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 6

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"Salve festa dies" is found in many and various forms in *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, such as those in volumes 4 (##28 and 29, Ascension, pp. 26–27; #30, Pentecost, p. 27; #44, Corpus Christi, pp. 32–33). Joseph Herl explains that the author, Venantius Fortunatus, wrote the lengthy poem in honor of newly baptized Saxon converts at an Easter Vigil between 567–576 (*The Hymnal 1982 Companion* [Episcopal], ed. Raymond F. Glover [New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1994]: 3A, 358–361, #175). The relevant stanza/refrain appears to be:

"Salve, festa dies, toto venerabilis aeo,  
qua deus infernum vicit et astra tenet  
[“Hail, festival day, venerable in every age,  
on which God conquered hell and reached the stars”]  
(*Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, 50: 79, 82–84).

According to Herl, the Latin hymn never was a part of the Roman breviary or missal, but it was used during the Middle Ages in extra-liturgical processions, entering standard service books in the nineteenth century via English versions (361).

The German text of "Also heilig ist der tag" is: "Also heilig ist der tag, den niemand mit lob erfüllen mag  
Denn der einige Gottes Son,

der die Helle zubrach  
und den leidigen Teuffel darein gebant”

(Philipp Wackernagel, *Das deutsche Kirchenlied von der ältesten Zeit bis zu Angang des XVII. Jahrhunderts* [Leipzig, 1964], IV, 35, #59). Translation of the German:

So holy is this day of days  
No Man can fill its meed of praise,  
Since the Holy Son of God  
Now hath conquered Death and Hell,  
And bound the Devil who there doth dwell,  
So hath the Lord delivered Christendom:  
This was Christ Himself: Kyrie Eleison!

(Translation by Catherine Winkworth, found at <http://www.ccel.org/w/winkworth/singers/h8.htm>) Wackernagel quotes a Catholic songbook from around 1600 that includes two other stanzas by Valentin Triller. The first stanza Wackernagel gives is that from which Luther quotes. Variations on this verse abound, including one with translation in *Leise Settings of the Renaissance and Reformation Era*, ed. Johannes Riedel (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 1980), xviii. Riedel argues that before the Reformation such settings were both incorporated into liturgies for festival seasons and used outside Sunday liturgies (such as pilgrimages and processions), and that after the Reformation they were used in the Lutheran mass during or after the communion service (xii–xiii).

There are nine four-line stanzas for “Also heylig” given in *Das deutsche evangelische Kirchenlied*, ed. A. Fischer and W. Tümpel (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), I: 107–107, #136. Fischer-Tümpel identifies #136, “Also heylig ist dieser Tag,” as an Easter song, with the subtitle “Das Salve festa dies, deutsch” (I: 106). Johannes Zahn (*Die Melodien der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenlieder* [Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964], IV, 304–305, #7149) likewise identifies a German hymn as “*Salve festa dies*,” which contains a section beginning “*Also heilig ist dieser Tag*” and continuing similar to the verse above. This apparently appeared in a 1531 hymnal, and later in a 1557 hymnal this second portion of the hymn appeared on its own with some variation. Though perhaps intended as a translation, Herl describes it as “a pretty loose paraphrase” that “includes only the refrain” (Herl, personal e-mail to Jayson S. Galler, 7 July 2002). Jon D. Vieker describes “Also heilig ist der tag” as an anonymous, pre-Reformation German version of “*Salva festa Dies*,” though he goes on to write that “For all intents and purposes, the German would be considered the original” (Vieker, personal e-mail to Jayson S. Galler, 19 June 2002). (“Grüest seist heyliger tag” also appears to be a German version of “*Salve festa dies*” [see <http://www.virgilschola.org/themen.htm>].)

Vieker also reports that C. F. W. Walther’s 1847 hymnal included a version of “Also heilig,” drawn from the 1791 edition of the Dresden *Gesangbuch*. Early English LCMS hymnals did not, however, include a translation. *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982) has three variations of “*Salve, festa dies*”: #125 (Easter), 148 (Ascension), and 159 (Pentecost). There the Easter refrain is: Hail thee, festival day! Blest day to be hallowed forever; Day when our Lord was raised, breaking the kingdom of death. *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978) #142, includes a refrain and verses for each of the three festivals, as does #398 in *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 1996). (The LW and LH translations are from LBW.) *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993) #179 is a Pentecost version only.

In 1524, some years before this sermon, Luther himself wrote a hymn dealing with this topic, “Christ lag ynn todes banden” (see TLH #195, LW #123, AE 53: 255–257). Partial German texts of Luther’s hymn are available in *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, 148, and [www.friske.com/lagd.htm](http://www.friske.com/lagd.htm); for the complete text see WA 35: 443–445; 506–507.

We acknowledge with appreciation the help of Dr. Joseph Herl, Rev. Donald Patterson, Ms. Joan Sander, and Rev. Jon D. Vieker in tracking down the foregoing hymn information.

97. FC SD IX, 3 says: “sunder will allein geglaubt und on dem Wort gehalten” (BSLK, 1053). Compare paragraphs 19 (WA 37: 69, 28) and 20 (WA 37: 69, 33).

98. The German is: “Und ob ich gleich lange scharff suche, doch nichts mehr da von kan fassen, sondern viel ehe den rechten verstand verliere, wo ich nicht wol verwaret an dem Wort fest halte.” Luther here emphasizes the paternal care of the “old [church] fathers” for the “crude people’s . . . childlike” needs. Kolb’s translation (Kolb, 248) and Truemper’s translation (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 4) both seem to miss the benefit of holding firm to the word: being well taken care of.

99. See above, n. 78.

100. “Sonst folget der zweyer eines, das sie entweder nichts da von lernen noch verstehen, odder wo sie auch wollen klug sein und mit vernunft jnn die hohen

gedancken geraten, das sie gar vom glauben kometen.” The danger Luther sees is that the “crude people” will either not employ reason and not learn or employ reason and lose their faith. Instead Luther suggests bypassing reason, which would overwhelm the uneducated, and to acquire faith through the word of God and images. In his translation Kolb gives some credence to reason that might, however, lead to thoughts “that do not arise out of faith” (Kolb, 248).

101. For a discussion of Ep’s and SD’s differing treatments of such questions, see the Introduction.

102. Ep IX, 3 explains how Luther, in this sermon, “solchen Artikel ganz christlich erkläret, alle unnützliche, unnötwendige fragen abgeschnitten und zu christlicher Einfalt des Glaubens alle fromme Christen vormahnet” (BSLK, 813).

103. This seems to be a paraphrase of a creedal statement. SD IX, 1 quotes the sermon verbatim (BSLK, 1052).

104. There are echoes of the Athanasian Creed: “one, indeed, not by confusion of substance but by unity in one person. For just as the reasonable soul and the flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ, who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose from the dead . . .” (Tappert, 20, 34–36).

105. FC SD IX, 2: “daß die ganze Person, Gott und Mensch, nach der Begräbnus zur Helle gefahren” (BSLK, 1052–1053).

106. Psalm 16:10. The text in Luther’s 1545 Bible is: “Denn du wirst meine Seele nicht in der Hölle lassen und nicht zugeben, daß dein Heiliger verweise.” Throughout this sermon, as here, the present translators use the KJV translation of the verse Luther quotes, which has been checked against Luther’s German translation.

107. See above, n. 74.

108. “Wie aber solchs möge zu gangen sein, das der mensch da im grabe ligt und doch zur Helle feret, das sollen und müssen wir wol unergründet und unverstanden lassen.” Kolb renders: “However it may have happened that this human creature was lying in the grave and then descended into hell, we should and must let stand. We cannot fathom or understand it” (Kolb, 249). His translation suggests that one is incapable of understanding it, where Luther’s point seems to be that one should not even attempt to understand it. See also above, n. 100. Compare the sermon and discussion above, at paragraph 2, where the sense is that the descent happened while the body was still in the grave.

109. Luther here does not deny that Christ descended bodily (see paragraph 8 and SD IX, 2). Rather, he denies that the descent took place in the precise manner the plays and images would suggest, as above, paragraphs 3 (WA 37: 63, 12–13) and 6 (WA 37: 64, 3–5).

110. This seems to be an allusion to Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27; and Luke 11:21. Truemper documents how, in portraying the descent, German iconography, especially in southern Germany, pictured the netherworld as a house or fortress; this was also true of Albrecht Dürer’s passion work (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 86–87).

111. See above, n. 74.

112. “beschmissen klugheit”; Luther’s expression here is far more earthy. Kolb renders it as “rotting wisdom” (Kolb, 249); in his translation Truemper takes it as “dung-covered wisecracks” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 6); and Hohle has “besmirched smarts.”

113. See above, n. 75.

114. Truemper takes note of the tension between rejecting scholastic precision but accepting pictures, plays, and hymns “informed by the scholastic conception of the descent” (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 106, n. 4; 108, #3).

115. “Da ligt auch nichts an, wenn ich nur das behalte, so durch solche bild wird angezeigt, das ich von Christo gleuben sol, welches ist das heubtstück, nutz und krafft, so wir davon haben, das mich und alle, die an jn gleuben, weder helle noch teuffel gefangen nemen noch schaden kan.” Kolb separates the true teaching of the pictures from the pictures themselves, rendering: “It doesn’t depend on whether I hang on to what is depicted with the image but rather that I believe these things of Christ” (Kolb, 249). Syntactically, the relative clause “das ich . . . gleuben sol” is the direct object of *behalten*. The subordinate clause *so . . . angezeigt* modifies the way to keep the faith. Compare Truemper’s translation: “as is shown by means of such pictures” (Truemper, “Concerning Jesus Christ,” 7).

SD IX, 3 concludes by quoting from here: “weder Helle noch Teuffel gefangen-nemen noch schaden könnten” (BSLK, 1053). Compare below, paragraph 11 (WA 37: 66, 15–20).

116. Matthew 16:18: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This statement is made notably in the context of the Office of the Keys, keys that open and close hell and heaven.

Both Kolb’s and Truemper’s translations de-emphasize Luther’s stress on the *pro nobis* aspect of Christ’s work: “das mich und alle, die an jn gleuben” (Kolb, 249–250; Truemper, “Concerning Jesus Christ,” 7).

117. Compare paragraph 10 above (WA 37: 66, 9). This is a transition point in the sermon.

118. “und wenn er da hin feret.” Kolb renders, “and because he went there” (Kolb, 250), as if the subject were Christ. In his translation, Truemper accurately

has the Christian as the subject: “and when he passes on” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 8). The thought of the Christian descending through hell en route to eternal life is explicit in the remainder of the sentence.

119. The sermon as copied by Jakob Andreae in the margin of his manuscript of the Formula of Concord ends here (*BSLK*, 1052).

120. *für uns arme elende leute*; Contrary to Kolb’s translation: “for his poor miserable people” (Kolb, 251), Luther includes himself among their number.

121. This seems to be an allusion to Romans 11:36: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” See also below, paragraph 16 (*WA* 37: 68, 9–10).

122. 1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

123. The tension between the eschatological *now* and *not yet* is reflected in the ambiguity of Luther’s grammar. Christ’s death and resurrection are clearly in the past; our resurrection is clearly in the future. For the time period in between, Luther uses all available tenses: past for our bondage in hell, present for our redemption, and future for our final victory.

124. 1 Corinthians 15:25, 27: “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. . . . For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.” Luther extrapolates from all things being under Christ’s feet to all things being under the believer’s feet. See also 1 Kings 5:3; Psalm 8:6; and Hebrews 2:8 (itself a reference to Psalm 8).

125. The angel’s words at the tomb (Mt 28:6; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:6), and also a popular hymn by which Luther’s own resurrection hymn was said to be inspired. Luther’s hymn (see the Introduction and above, n. 96) is said to be inspired by the widely popular *Leise* “Christ ist erstanden” (popular already by the thirteenth century), which itself is said to go back to the Latin sequence “*Victimae Paschali laudes*” (circa 1050). (See *AE* 53: 355.)

126. Ephesians 2:5–6: “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Luther, perhaps to keep to his resurrection theme, in the sermon omits “even when we were dead in sins” and “by grace ye are saved.”

127. “Ich lebe forthin nicht mehr, sondern Christus lebet jnn mir.” Compare the 1545 *Lutherbibel*: “Ich lebe aber, doch nun nicht ich, sondern Christus lebet in mir.” “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

128. Romans 8:33–34.

129. While this appears to be a reference to the angel’s words at the tomb, the Vulgate of Matthew 28:6, 7; Mark 16:6; and Luke 24:6 all have *surrexit*. The Vulgate of the New Testament uses *resurrexit* 15 times and *surrexit* 42 times. In Matthew 14:2 and Mark 6:14, they are used in parallel accounts, both rendering the Greek ἐγείρω. As with the Greek prefix *ana-*, the Latin prefix *re-* prefixes intensify the base meaning of the verb (compare the “rose again” in English). We thank Dr. Josef Lössl for his insight into this matter.

130. This echoes the Small Catechism’s explanation to the second article of the Creed: “that I may be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity” (SC II, 4; Tappert, 346). See also the connection “in and through” Christ above, paragraph 14 (*WA* 37: 67, 22–23).

131. Romans 6:3–4 and Colossians 2:11–12 appear to be the verses on Luther’s mind. (Romans 6:3–4: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Col 2:11–12 “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”) This is a baptismal reference, for it is in baptism that one is both buried and raised with Christ. Luther makes a more explicit baptismal connection below in paragraphs 18 (*WA* 37: 69, 4–22) and 24 (*WA* 37: 71, 12). Truemper discusses the interrelationship of baptism, the flood, and the descent as well as their relationship to 1 Peter 3:19 and Romans 6 (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 51–55, especially 52).

132. “on das es noch verborgen und nicht offenbar ist”; Luther emphasizes the eyes of faith that see the resurrection and life already started in Christ. They can see beyond what is concealed from unbelievers’ eyes. Kolb and Truemper take the clause as an adversative: “still hidden and not revealed” (Kolb, 251; Truemper, “Concerning Jesus Christ,” 11, emphasis added). See also below, paragraphs 20 (*WA* 37: 69, 42–43), 22 (*WA* 37: 70, 25–29), and the greater discussion at n. 149.

133. “Weil nu Christus, das Heubt der Christenheit, durch welchen sie lebt und alles hat und so gros ist, das er himel und erden fület . . .”; Luther is referring to passages such as Ephesians 1:23 (“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”) or 4:10 (“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heav-

ens, that he might fill all things”).

The relationship of the relative clauses is ambiguous. Kolb renders: “For Christ, the head of the Christian church, through whom it lives and has everything and has grown so great, fills heaven and earth” (Kolb, 252). Truemper translates: “Since now Christ, the head of Christendom through whom it lives, who has everything and is so great that He fills heaven and earth” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 11).

134. *WA*’s editors document this reference as 2 Thessalonians 4:14 and Romans 8:11, but it is obviously a reference to 1 Thessalonians. (1 Th 4:14: “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” Rom 8:11: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”)

135. This is an allusion to Romans 8:20–21: “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

136. Compare Ruth 1:16; Matthew 6:21; and Luke 12:34. (Ru 1:16: “And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Mt 6:21 and Lk 12:34: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”) But, most importantly, Luther continues to employ birth imagery: the head passing out of the birth canal first and the body following. See also below, paragraphs 18 (*WA* 37: 69, 7–8) and 24 (*WA* 37: 71, 14).

137. “Denn dieser leib ist, wie Sanct Paulus sagt, nur eine hutten der seelen, als von erden odder thon gemacht und ein veraltet kleid odder ein alter schebichter peltz.” Compare 2 Corinthians 5:1,4: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” In his 1545 Bible, Luther uses *hütte* in these verses to translate the Greek σκηνος, which is used only there in the New Testament.

138. *an im hanget* grammatically can designate either “him” or “it.” Kolb renders, “cling to it” (Kolb, 252); and Truemper translates, “holds fast to Him” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 13). The idea, however, seems to be that by faith one is attached to Christ (not to the Creed), not by the choice of the individual but by nature of being connected to the body of Christ, extending the body-part analogy that Luther has been using.

139. There are echoes here of Luther’s answer to the fourth question regarding baptism. Baptizing with water signifies “that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God’s presence” (SC IV, 12; Tappert, 349). The Catechism’s fifth question on baptism, as to where this is written, refers to Romans 6:4, a passage already alluded to by Luther in the sermon.

140. “Denn es stosset gar seer für den kopff”; the translation attempts to be faithful to the head imagery Luther continues.

141. See above, n. 75.

142. Compare above, n. 97.

143. Compare above, n. 97.

144. The phrase *ein ander gesicht* is eloquently translated by Truemper as “sense of vision” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 13).

145. See above, n. 75.

146. Luther uses a long series of clauses, duplicating rhetorically the string Christ is pulling. He is following his own advice by linguistically painting a picture of the connection between the believer’s human nature following its soul following Christ.

147. See above, n. 75.

148. See above, n. 75.

149. “Aber ich hab einen höhern verstand, denn die augen sehen und sinne fülen, den mich der glaube leret.” In this case, Luther contrasts what reason judges, the eyes see, and the senses feel with what faith teaches and its “different sense of vision.” The eyes and senses follow either the influence of reason, which leads to damnation, or follow faith, which leads to a “higher understanding” and salvation. The basic idea that permeates the entire sermon is Luther’s concept of the senses’ ability to transcend mortal perception. The antagonistic forces he postulates are reason on one hand, which blurs the senses’ vision of the truth, and faith on the other, which gives the believer a sort of x-ray vision that disregards the superficial and focuses on the essential. Throughout the sermon Luther alternates his emphases, which leads to seemingly contradictory statements. This causes some difficulty in translation. Kolb’s and Truemper’s translations of this passage illustrate this dilemma.

Kolb renders, “But I have a higher level of understanding, for my eyes see and my senses feel what faith teaches me” (Kolb, 253). Truemper’s translates, “But I have a higher understanding than that which the eyes see and the senses perceive, one which faith teaches me” (“Concerning Jesus Christ,” 14). Compare above, paragraph 16 (*WA* 37: 68, 12–13), especially n. 132, where the eyes of faith see that which is contrasted to reason, etc., and below, paragraph 22 (*WA* 37: 70, 25–29), where the hear-

ers are also not to judge according to their eyes.

150. Compare Mark 4:26–29. In the Parable of the Growing Seed, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to the growth of a seed that happens without the knowledge of the man who scattered it on the ground.

151. “Weil wir nu jnn solchem jrdischem wesen solchs thun müssen.” Once again Luther emphasizes that if we do not understand an *earthly* matter such as a seed’s growth then we can hardly understand a *spiritual* matter such as the resurrection.

152. Compare 1 Corinthians 15, especially verses 36–56, which deal with the sowing of the body to die and the raising of the body in a new form, given by God, imperishable, in glory, power, spiritual, etc. This provides the complement to Luther’s use of the Parable of the Growing Seed.

153. Compare above, paragraphs 16 (WA 37: 68, 12–13) and 20 (WA 37: 69, 42–43).

154. Compare the committal formula “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

155. The translation attempts to make sense of *leiblich* in the WA text, though the editors there note a variant, *lieblich*, in B. Hohle is similar: “physically glorious.” In their translations, both Kolb and Truemper apparently take the variant: “lovely, glorious, and beautiful” (Kolb, 254; Truemper, “Concerning Jesus Christ,” 15).

156. The Weimar editors refer to WA 36: 163, 15, which is a reference to the Rörer notes of the Easter 1532 sermon. There Luther in essence tells the same story: “Sic legitur de Agatha, ubi capta in Carcerem et ad locum etc. dicebat se ire ad saltum i.e. ubi mortua et sepulta etc. wie whe geschicht mir i.e. man pfeiff mir ein reygen, ut sol tantzen. Et haben istam resurrectionem viel fester eingebild quam nullus rusticus das korn.” (Note well the resurrection-grain connection.) Following this, the Weimar editors in volume 36 refer to WA 12: 382, 20, which is a reference to Luther’s 1523 commentary on 1 Peter 4:13, where he also mentions St. Agatha. According to Jacobus de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (trans. William Granger Ryan [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], 1: 154–157), Agatha was a virgin living a pure and holy life in Catania, where she attracted the attention of Quintianus, provost of Sicily. He commanded her to sacrifice to idols, and, when she repeatedly would not, he eventually sent her to prison, to which “she went happy and triumphant, as if invited to a banquet.” She eventually gave up

her spirit as a virgin martyr in 253.

157. The WA editors refer to WA 36: 163, 19, which is a reference to the Rörer notes of the Easter 1532 sermon. There Luther is recorded as having said: “Sic S. Vincentius, da man yhm so drewet mit gladio, feuer, tod, quid?” (“Thus St. Vincent, when he was threatened with the sword, fire, death, what?”)

*The Golden Legend* (1: 105–108) also relates the story of Vincent. He was a deacon to Valerius, bishop of Saragossa. Dacian the governor cast them both into prison, and after he thought them to be dead from hunger found them “in good health and spirits.” They refused to deny the faith, and Vincent was sent to be tormented. Smiling, he said he desired death. He was tormented with scourges, rods, and iron combs, so that his entrails and guts showed. He was burned and stuck with iron nails and burning iron spikes, and his wounds were salted. He mocked his tormenters for being too slow. To prevent a glorious death under torment, he was removed to a soft bed and soft clothes to be made strong and later tormented anew, but he gave up his spirit in 287 before that could happen.

158. Compare the previous head illustration above, paragraphs 17 (WA 37: 69, 2–3) and 18 (WA 37: 69, 7–8).

159. The image is more violent than shedding skin, and it may refer back to St. Agatha, who had her breasts cut off only for them to grow back overnight (see *The Golden Legend* as cited above).

160. Truemper notes that the correspondence between the Rörer transcript and the published sermon ends before the concluding paragraph of each (WA 36: 163, 29 and 37: 71, 18, respectively). Truemper suggests that the concluding paragraph of the published sermon, a translation of which follows here, serves as a conclusion to the set of three (*Descensus ad Infernos*, 103, n. 34) Nothing follows that is unique to the descent or not applicable to all of the Creed’s second article.

161. Compare 1 Corinthians 2, especially verses 7 and 10: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: . . . But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Kolb refers to Romans 11:33, which refers to the depth of God’s wisdom, but not its being hidden *in mysterio* (Kolb, 254).

162. See above, n. 75.