# CONTENTS

General Introduction ix

Abbreviations xi

Introduction to Volume 58 xv

## Selected Sermons (1539)

- Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent, 2 Cor. 6:1–10; Admonition Concerning the Ban or Excommunication; Exhortation to the Jurists, February 23, 1539
  - Translated by Carl P. E. Springer, revised and introduced by James M. Estes.
  - Annotated by James M. Estes and Christopher Boyd Brown.

- Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent, 1 Thess. 4:1–7, March 2, 1539
  - Translated and introduced by James M. Estes.
  - Annotated by James M. Estes and Christopher Boyd Brown.

First Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt, Matt. 3:1–17, April 1, 1540
  - Translated by Jon Steffen Bruss

## Selected Sermons (Epiphany 1544)

- Sermon for Epiphany, Matt. 2:1–12, January 6, 1544
  - Translated and introduced by James M. Estes.
  - Annotated by James M. Estes and Christopher Boyd Brown.

- Sermon for the First Sunday after Epiphany, Matt. 3:13–17, January 13, 1544
  - Translated and introduced by James M. Estes.
  - Annotated by James M. Estes and Christopher Boyd Brown.

- Sermon for the Second Sunday after Epiphany: On Parental Consent to Betrothals, John 2, January 20, 1544
  - Translated and introduced by James M. Estes.
  - Annotated by James M. Estes and Christopher Boyd Brown.
Eastertide Sermons on 1 Corinthians 15:35–44, 51–57 (1544–45) 89
Dedication by Andreas Poach
Translated by Christopher Boyd Brown
The First Sermon, 1 Cor. 15:35–38, May 11, 1544 102
Translated by Benjamin Haupt
Translated by Margaret L. Arnold
The Third Sermon: On the Last Trumpet of God, 1 Cor. 15:51–53, May 10, 1545 133
Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux
The Fourth Sermon: On the Verse from the Prophet Hosea [13:14], 1 Cor. 15:54–57, May 31, 1545 148
Translated by Aaron M. Moldenhauer

Selected Sermons (Summer and Fall 1544)
Afternoon Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, Rom. 8:18–23, July 6, 1544 163
Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux
Sermon on the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels, Rev. 12:7–12, September 29, 1544 171
Translated by Matt Lundin

Christmastide Sermons (1544) 187
Sermon for Christmas Vespers, Luke 2:8–14, December 25, 1544 192
Translated by Christopher Boyd Brown
Afternoon Sermon for St. Stephen’s Day, Titus 3:4–5, December 26, 1544 199
Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux
Sermon for the Sunday after Christmas, Titus 3:4–8, December 28, 1544 206
Translated by Paul Hinlicky

Selected Sermons (1545)
Sermon for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, Rom. 12:6b, January 18, 1545 215
Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux
Sermon for the Third Sunday after Easter, 1 Pet. 2:11–20, April 26, 1545 224
Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux
Translated by Nicholas D. Proksch

Sermon for the First Sunday after Epiphany (1546)
Afternoon Sermon for the First Sunday after Epiphany, Titus 3:4–8, January 10, 1546
Translated by James Langebartels

Four Sermons in Eisleben (1546)
Johann Aurifaber’s Preface
Translated by Christopher Boyd Brown
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Matt. 8:23–27, January 31, 1546
Translated by Adam Francisco
Sermon for the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Luke 2:22–32, February 2, 1546
Translated by Kevin Walker
Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, Matt. 13:24–30, February 7, 1546
Translated by Kevin Walker
Admonition against the Jews
Translated by Kevin Walker

Indexes
THese sermons on the resurrection of the dead, which give the appearance of being the special serial exposition of a single book, were in fact delivered as part of the regular Sunday afternoon preaching in Wittenberg. In 1544, the Wittenberg church reorganized the lectionary for the Sundays after Easter so that the Epistle readings for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays—and thus the texts for the afternoon sermons in the parish church—were taken from 1 Cor. 15:20–57, replacing the traditional readings from the Epistle of James (1:16–27). “It would be better,” Luther wrote, “to give this season its due and, between Easter and Pentecost, for the instruction and comfort of the people, to give a thorough exposition of the article concerning both Christ’s resurrection and our own—that is, the resurrection of all the dead—on the basis of the preaching of the apostles, such as the fifteenth chapter of St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians, all of which deals with the resurrection of the dead.”

But though this change was announced and explained in the final 1544 edition of the Church Postil, the reader was there referred to Luther’s published 1532–33 exposition of 1 Corinthians 15. Luther preached for the first time according to the new arrangements during the Easter seasons of 1544 and 1545, though the dates of Luther’s preaching on 1 Corinthians 15 in these years in fact varied somewhat from the announced schedule.

These sermons were preserved in separate sets of notes taken by Georg Rörer and by Johann Stolz, though both of these do not survive to the present

---

1 Church Postil (1544), WA 21:349–50; Lenker 7:286. The change in the Eastertide readings was also reflected in the revised lectionary in the 1546 Wittenberg Bible, WA DB 7:534, which assigned 1 Cor. 15:20ff., 39ff., and 51ff. to the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays after Easter.


3 Luther preached on May 11 (Fourth Sunday after Easter) and May 25 (Sunday after Ascension) in 1544, and on May 3 (Fourth Sunday after Easter), May 10 (Fifth Sunday after Easter), and May 31 (Trinity Sunday) in 1545. Poach omitted the sermon of May 3, 1545, whose text overlapped with that of the 1544 sermons.
in every case. Four of the sermons were edited for posthumous publication by Andreas Poach\(^4\) in 1563–64, with a dedication to Erasmus Schmid, mayor of the city of Nordhausen, where Poach had served as pastor from 1547 to 1550.

Poach’s edition of the sermons enjoyed rather wide popularity in the late-sixteenth-century press, likely on account of both the vigorous homiletical style of the sermons and their apocalyptic focus on the Last Day. After the first Erfurt edition of 1564, its printer, Georg Baumann the Elder, issued a second edition by the end of the same year and another in 1565.\(^5\) His successors published additional Erfurt editions in 1569 and 1574,\(^6\) and a Hamburg edition appeared in 1592.\(^7\) Although likely intended by Poach for inclusion in the never-published third volume of the Eisleben supplemental edition of Luther’s works,\(^8\) the sermons first appeared in Luther’s collected works in the eighth volume of the Altenburg edition, appearing in 1662, and passed into other editions thereafter.

Although there is inevitably some overlap of theological content with Luther’s 1532–33 preaching and the published commentary on 1 Corinthians 15, translated in LW 28,\(^9\) the fresh translation of these 1544–45 sermons is justified not only by their sixteenth-century popularity but also by their distinct theological emphases.

The first sermon, on 1 Cor. 15:35–38, was delivered on the afternoon of the Fourth Sunday after Easter (Cantate Sunday), May 11, 1544, in the parish church in Wittenberg. The sermon is preserved in Stolz’s notes and is also summarized in Anton Lauterbach’s notebook of Luther’s table talk,\(^10\) though Rörer’s notes, on which Poach’s edition of the sermon was chiefly based, have not survived down to the present. The sermon deals with the

---

\(^4\) On Poach, see the volume introduction, above, pp. xxvi–xxvii.


\(^6\) Erfurt: Konrad Dreher, 1569 (VD 16 ZV 10014), and Esaias Mechler, 1574 (VD 16 L 6961).

\(^7\) Hamburg: Elias Hutter, 1592 (VD 16 L 6962).

\(^8\) See Kolb, *Luther as Prophet, Teacher, Hero*, p. 150.

\(^9\) The parallel treatment of 1 Cor. 15:35–57 is found in LW 28:170–213.

\(^10\) *Table Talk* no. 6031 (1544), WA TR 5:447–48. A modern German edition of the sermon from Stolz’s notes is given in Ellwein 2:272–76.
connection between the article of the general resurrection of Christians and the “chief article of Christian doctrine,” the resurrection of Christ, so that one cannot be denied without denying the other. Nonetheless, reason objects to the idea of resurrection. But Luther points to God’s Word on the one hand and the article of God’s omnipotence on the other as the firm foundation of the possibility and assurance of the general resurrection. Failure to believe in God’s omnipotence behind His promises is the basis of many theological errors among the heretics and Sacramentarian “fanatics”: denial of the virgin birth, denial of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, denial of the power of Baptism and Absolution.

According to an account in Johann Aurifaber’s published version of Lauterbach’s *Table Talk*, the development of the sermon around the doctrine of divine omnipotence—a central emphasis of Luther’s old Nominalist teachers—was fortuitous:

In the evening the Doctor said at home “that he had a different outline and subject in mind on which he had intended to preach, and had come only by chance upon the article of God’s omnipotence”—a sermon that was straightforward and easier for the common man to grasp.

Whatever the route by which Luther came to the subject, his application of the *locus* of omnipotence to the doctrine of the Sacraments was timely in light of controversy that had arisen concerning the end of the elevation of the elements in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the Wittenberg church in 1542. Although Luther seems to have maintained the practice for decades largely in defiance of his former colleague and longtime theological opponent Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, now a professor in Basel, who had died at the end of 1541, the liturgical change led to claims that Luther had now in fact come to agreement with the Swiss successors of Ulrich

---

11 Luther could refer to various articles of Christian faith surrounding Christ’s person and work as the “chief”: here, Christ’s resurrection and also God’s omnipotence (cf. also *Sermons on John 18–20* [1528–29/1557], LW 69:285–86); elsewhere, the person of Christ, e.g., *Sermons on John 17* (1528/1530), LW 69:30 and n. 76; and especially the doctrine of justification as the article by which the Church stands or falls, *Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees* (1532–33/1540), WA 40/3:351 (LW 66). See also *Freedom of a Christian* (1520), LW 31:351ff.; *Smalcald Articles* (1537/1538) II 1 (Kolb-Wengert, p. 301; Concordia, p. 263).


13 *Table Talk* no. 6031 (1544), WA TR 5:449.

14 Brecht 3:283; *Brief Confession* (1544), LW 38:313–19; cf. *German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), LW 53:82.
Zwingli, a charge to which Luther finally responded in his *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament* later in 1544.\(^{15}\)

The second sermon, on 1 Cor. 15:39–44,\(^{16}\) was delivered on the Sunday after the Ascension (Exaudi Sunday), May 25, 1544, probably in the afternoon, in the parish church in Wittenberg. The sermon is preserved in Poach's copy of Rörer's notes as well as in Poach's published version.\(^{17}\) Luther preaches on Paul's explanation of the resurrection through parallels with the planting and growth of seeds in the earth. To develop the illustration, Luther sets against the divine farmer who sows in his field a personification of the clever objections of reason: the folktales character Hans Pfriem, a sharp-tongued cart driver who was incapable of refraining from offering his criticism, even in heaven itself. But despite the foolish complaints of reason, Luther says, nature itself is like a Bible in which a Christian can read about God's miraculous power to bring life out of death.

The story of Hans Pfriem was evidently in circulation early in the sixteenth century.\(^{18}\) Some of its elements (though not the central character) were borrowed from the life of St. Arsenius, the abbot, in the *Legenda Aurea*.\(^{19}\) Luther had told the story at table in 1536, where it was recorded by Lauterbach, though this particular piece of table talk was not printed in the sixteenth-century edition edited by Aurifaber.\(^{20}\) The story seems instead to have gained literary currency through its mention in this sermon as published by Poach along with a complete retelling of the tale, clearly based on Lauterbach's manuscript, in his preface to the set of sermons (below, pp. 99–100).\(^{21}\) Poach's version in turn became the source for a school-comedy

---

\(^{15}\) *Brief Confession* (1544), LW 38:279–319; see Brecht 3:326–29.

\(^{16}\) The biblical text printed in full in Poach's edition begins with 1 Cor. 15:39, but Stolz's notes suggest that the text read from the pulpit began with v. 35.

\(^{17}\) A partial edition of Rörer's notes in modern German can be found in Ellwein 2:277–81.

\(^{18}\) See Johann Eberlin von Günzburg, *Klag und antwort von Lutheranischen und Bepstischemn pfaffen über die Reformacion so neulich zu Regenspurc des priester halben aufgangen ist im Jar MCXXXIII* ([Nürnberg]: [Höltzel], [1524]), f. A3v; in Oskar Schade, ed., *Satiren und Pasquille aus der Reformationzeit*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Hannover: Carl Rümpler, 1863), p. 139, where "Niclas Pfriem" is mentioned as a purveyor of nonsense alongside Claus Narr (d. 1515), the famous Saxon court jester.

\(^{19}\) *LA* 2:353, no. 178. Arsenius is shown a series of self-defeating activities parallel to those Hans Pfriem observes in heaven. In the story of Arsenius, however, these are the works of sinful men on earth and are denounced by the saint's angelic guide.

\(^{20}\) *Table Talk* no. 3501 (1536), WA TR 3:360–61.

written by Martin Hayneccius (1544–1611) and published in 1581 (in Latin) and 1582 (translated into German). A substantially different version of the story eventually found its way into the Grimms’ collection.

The third sermon, on 1 Cor. 15:51–53, was delivered on the Fifth Sunday after Easter (Vocem Jucunditatis Sunday), May 10, 1545, probably in the afternoon, in the parish church in Wittenberg. It is preserved in separate sets of notes by Rörer (in Poach’s copy) and by Stolz, and Poach clearly drew on both for his published version. The sermon contrasts the “bearable” divine speech in the present preaching of the Word with the unbearable sounds of the Last Day: the shout of the angel and the trumpet of God. Poach takes the onomatopoetic representations that are present here and there in the notes and amplifies them in the published sermon into an overpowering cacophony of noise. The Christian should always keep the Last Day in mind, Luther says, quoting a maxim attributed to St. Jerome (ca. 325–420). But rather than urging a life of monastic renunciation, Luther counsels Christians to fulfill their vocations in the world faithfully, remembering the last trumpet while enjoying the “eating, drinking, good cheer, and happiness” that God grants as a benevolent Father—but not mocking God and the last judgment with security amid unrepentant sin.

The fourth sermon, delivered on Trinity Sunday, May 31, 1545, in the parish church in Wittenberg, probably in the afternoon, is on 1 Cor. 15:54–57, especially on Paul’s quotation from Isa. 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. Luther hails this text as a specimen of “a genuine Pauline and evangelical theology.” Returning to the theme of the unity of Christ’s resurrection with the
resurrection of Christians, Luther insists that Christ’s victory over death also belongs to Christians. Christ conquers death by taking away its sting—that is, sin which awakens to torment the conscience through the Law. Christians begin their victory in this life through faith, but it will be completed at the general resurrection, “manifest in body and in sight.” The sermon is preserved in notes by Rörer (in Poach’s copy) and by Stolz, both of which are drawn on by Poach for the printed edition.

All four sermons are translated here from Poach’s printed edition as edited in WA 49:395–415, 422–41, 727–46, 761–80, with substantial divergences from the surviving notes by Rörer (R) and Stolz (S) indicated in the footnotes. Poach’s preface, not included in the WA, has been translated by the editor from the 1574 Erfurt edition, consulted on microfilm from the Thrivent Reformation Research Program from an exemplar of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, and compared with the text of the St. Louis edition (StL 8:1272–79).

---

29 See above, p. 92 n. 6.
FOUR SERMONS
ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD
AND THE LAST TRUMPET OF GOD,
FROM THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

Preached by the Dear Man of God,
the Reverend Herr Dr. Martin Luther,
in Wittenberg, in 1544 and 1545.
Never before published and now for the first time
gathered out of Master Georg Rörer’s notebooks
by Master Andreas Poach.

DEDICATION BY MASTER ANDREAS POACH,
PASTOR AT THE AUGUSTINIAN CHURCH IN ERFUFT

Translated by Christopher Boyd Brown

To the honorable and wise Herr Erasmus Schmid,1 mayor of the imperial city
of Nordhausen, my gracious lord and patron: Grace and peace in Christ, our Lord
and Savior!

Honorable, wise, gracious lord and patron! What one has promised, one is
obliged to fulfill. Because I promised these sermons of the dear man of God to your
honor long ago, I should rightly have edited them long ago as well, and sent them to
your honor. But first one thing has been lacking, now another, and now I myself am
at fault—for I do not want to excuse myself entirely. But it is also said that he who
comes slowly comes nonetheless. Therefore, I beg your honor to have patience even
though I am coming somewhat slowly with these sermons.

1 Erasmus Schmid (d. 1570) of Nordhausen had been a friend of Philip Melanchthon
and of Justus Jonas and an early adherent of Luther’s teaching. He was mayor in 1563, 1565,
and 1568 and had served as literary patron to other writers, particularly the pedagogue
Michael Neander (1525–95). See Ernst Günther Förstemann, ed., Friedrich Christian Lesser’s
Historische Nachrichten von der ehemals kaiserlichen und des heiligen römischen Reichs freien
Stadt Nordhausen (Nordhausen: F. Eberhardt, 1860), p. 204.
And they would still be timely in coming, if the world were more willing to accept help and counsel. For among other salutary doctrines, these sermons chastise unseasonable cleverness\(^2\) and carnal security—two sins that are now prevalent throughout the world. I call it “unseasonable cleverness” when someone presumes to criticize God in His words and works. This has been the case in every age, and especially in this last age, so that there is no bigger schoolboy in the world than our Lord God—everyone wants to be His schoolteacher and thinks he knows, speaks, and does everything better than God knows or has spoken or has done. It is as Christ laments (Matthew 11:19): “Wisdom must be justified by her children.”

A human being with reason at its best is blind, an idiot and fool in all divine matters. Nonetheless, he attempts to criticize God and His government.\(^3\) And this is the worst of it: that he wants such unseasonable cleverness to be regarded not as a mistake, but as right. In other spheres,\(^4\) reason stands against this, and it is chastised as a mistake and rejected by reason itself, as the proverbs of the Greeks and Romans attest: *Sus docet Minervam.*\(^5\) Or as we Germans have it: “The calf teaches the cow to calve”\(^6\) and “The egg teaches the hen.”\(^7\) But when unseasonable cleverness turns to the Church and God’s government, then reason is entirely on its side and refuses to be rebuked or condemned.\(^8\)

The holy Spirit has faithfully warned against this, as passages throughout Holy Scripture attest. “Do not be overly clever” (Ecclesiastes 7:17). “Do not regard yourselves as clever” (Romans 12:16). “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise, let him become a fool in this age so that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is folly with God” (1 Corinthians 3:18–19). But what good does it do? Everyone wants to be God’s schoolteacher—and so it is especially in this last age that everyone wants to teach Christ how He should rule His Church and ordain and institute the Sacrament, [and to teach] St. Paul how he should preach. I will say nothing about Luther, since he has become so useless and devoid of authority among such highly learned masters and supermasters.

That is why things are going so very well now in Christendom, since people do not abide in humility, in the simple truth, and there is no limit or end to the clever manipulations, so that there is scarcely any article of Christian doctrine that was not altered and falsified after Dr. Luther’s death, and scarcely any city or even village where there was not continual quarreling, strife, and division among preachers and their hearers. That is the pretty fruit of unseasonable cleverness, which takes Paul, Luther, even God Himself to school and teaches them how they should preach, teach, and write. Things will never be any different or any better!

\(^2\) unzeitige Klugheit

\(^3\) Regiment

\(^4\) Regimenten


\(^6\) Wander 2:1106, “Kalb” no. 140.

\(^7\) Wander 1:752, “Ei” no. 37.

Here I must recount the story of Hans Pfriem, which is mentioned below in the second sermon, for the sake of those who do not know it, so that they may understand it when they read it. God intends to conduct His government in such a way that no one should object. But the world cannot allow this; it must speak against whatever God says and does. That is why this story about Hans Pfriem was made up. He was a poor cart driver, to whom God gave permission to be in paradise and to enjoy all the joys and delights of paradise (as it is said, “Carters would talk themselves up into heaven, if they were not so prone to curse so horribly”), but with the condition that he not make any objection to anything, but should keep quiet and be pleased with whatever he would hear and see in paradise.

Once he was in paradise and looked around, he found some who were drawing water in a pitcher that had no bottom. When he saw this, he was indignant and thought to himself: “What a strange and foolish way of doing things they have here! Why are they wearing themselves out with useless work?” For he wanted to judge the way of doing things in paradise by the way of doing things on earth and the way that carters and servants have to draw water for stables and barns. He would have liked to criticize this, but he remembered the condition on which he had entered paradise and went on by and kept quiet.

He went farther and noticed two carpenters carrying a thick, long beam. They had put it crosswise on their shoulders, and it was getting caught on both sides so that they could not go forward. He looked at them and thought in his heart: “What incompetent clods are these? They should carry the beam the long way, and they would be able to go forward.” He could hardly keep himself from objecting, but he managed to refrain, went on, and kept quiet.

When he had gone farther, he found a cart driver who had four horses in front of a wagon and was stuck in mud. Because he could not get out of the mud, he took two horses who had gone in front of the wagon and harnessed them behind the wagon, and he drove the horses behind as hard as those in front. When Hans Pfriem saw this—since it was his own profession—he could not keep back any longer, and he scolded the cart driver, saying: “Hey, you great fool! What are you doing there? Do you want to rip the wagon apart and destroy the horses needlessly in your stubbornness? Harness all four of the horses in front of the wagon, and drive them forward. That way you will bring the wagon out of the mud.”

And the idiot thought that he had hit the mark and done well and helped the team out of the mud with his cleverness. But he had behaved as a fool does when he thinks he is being most clever and had violated the condition and deserved to be expelled from paradise. And so, first, Peter was sent to him by God to bring him this order. [Peter] came and said, “Listen, Hans Pfriem, the Lord gives you notice that, because you have not kept the condition but transgressed God’s commandment, you must leave paradise.” Hans Pfriem answered: “Why should I leave paradise, when I am not as guilty before God as you are? How can that be fair? You have denied our Lord God [Matt. 26:69–75], and yet you remain in paradise; and am I to be cast out

---

9 See the sermon of May 25, 1544, below, pp. 119–32, especially pp. 119–20. For the sources of the story, see the introduction above, pp. 94–95.

10 Wander 1:1263, “Fuhrleute” no. 5.

11 Regiment
because of a single word? No, surely not!” Peter was ashamed and withdrew. Then God sent Paul, who came and said, “Hans Pfriem, you must leave paradise.” But Hans Pfriem gave a harsh retort to Paul as well and said: “You persecuted the congregation of God and blasphemed and slandered the Son of God [Acts 8:1; 9:1–5; 22:4–5, 19–21; 26:9–11], and nevertheless you remain in paradise. Am I to leave because I have spoken a word or two?”

Paul, too, was ashamed and went away from him. Then Mary Magdalene was sent. Hans Pfriem answered her in the same way and said, “You were a public sinner [Luke 8:2; 7:36–50], and are you telling me to leave paradise?” The holy man Moses was sent, as someone whom he ought to fear, since the enemies must fear him. But Hans Pfriem stood fast in his resolve and said to Moses: “Will you drive me out of paradise? Don’t you know that you have profaned our Lord God by unbelief and doubt in the presence of the people of Israel, when you were to strike the rock with your staff so that it would yield water” [Num. 20:11–12]?

Now, since Hans Pfriem refused to listen to any of the messengers and was able to reprove all of them, God sent him the innocent children. Then Hans Pfriem thought: “Oh dear, this is going to be difficult. How will I defend myself now so that I can stay in paradise? I cannot reprove the innocent children. If only I could get off this time, I would keep quiet ever after and not make any more objections to the way things are done in paradise.” And he thought to himself: “I know what I will do. I will play with the children and see whether I can get them to leave me by being kind.” And before the innocent children had come close to him, he climbed up into a tree and shook down many apples and called to the children, saying: “Come here, dear little children, come here! Do not be afraid to gather them up; once you have gathered the apples under this tree, I will climb another and shake down more.” That delighted the children, and they fell on the apples and forgot the orders with which they had been sent; and every child filled his skirt and went away and left Hans Pfriem there. And so Hans Pfriem stayed in paradise and kept quiet ever after and was pleased with whatever took place in paradise under God’s government.

This is a childlike but fine story, which teaches that God’s government of heaven and of the Church of Christ is far different from the rule of men in worldly governments on earth. For whoever wants to be and to remain in God’s kingdom and Church must keep quiet in the face of God’s government, Word, and work and be pleased with whatever God says and does, even if it seems foolish to reason. Whoever decides instead to object to God’s government will be cast out of paradise and heaven. The story also teaches that there is no greater sin than to object to God in His Word and works. God can bear with other sins and wants to forgive them—just as Peter, Paul, Mary Magdalene, and Moses were preserved under divine forbearance and remained in paradise. But this sin, of wanting to criticize [God] and objecting to His government, God will not bear with or endure. The history of the Church bears witness that, as we see at the present day, many have been made

---


13 Probably the “Holy Innocents” slain under Herod in Matt. 2:16.

14 Regiment
heretics, sectarians, and fanatics and fallen away from Christendom through their unseasonable cleverness, and still they continue to become heretics and sectarians and to fall away from Christendom. But, on the other hand, many poor sinners who allow themselves to be taught and governed by God have become great saints and have remained in Christendom through divine forbearance and the forgiveness of sins, and still today they are becoming saints of God and remain in Christendom.

The other sin that these sermons chastise, especially the third sermon, is carnal security. For at present the whole world, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, has fallen into the same common swinish faith and no longer fears either God or the devil, indeed, no longer believes in either of them. That is how it must be, so that just as Christ in His first coming found such swine even among His own people—those who said that there was no resurrection or angels or spirit (Acts 23:8), and yet boasted in the sight of other people about their great, exceptional holiness, calling themselves Sadducees, that is, “the saints”\(^\text{15}\)—so, too, at His second coming He must find such swinish saints who believe that there is no God or Last Day or eternal life or devil or hell, that is, who believe nothing at all, but mock God and His Word and walk according to their own desires (2 Peter 3:3). Nevertheless, such security and mockery must be rebuked, and whoever is willing to be warned must be warned against it. That is why the dear man of God preached about the Last Day and the last trumpet of God with such seriousness: so that everyone who hears this may marvel and be amazed at it.

I have gathered these sermons and have published them under your honor’s name in order to show my obedience and gratitude to your honor. For I have always acknowledged and continue to acknowledge your honor as my gracious lord, friend, and patron. I would have liked to set these sermons, especially the one about the last trumpet of God, down on paper just as the man of God brought them into the ears of those who heard him with his living voice. But because that is impossible, I have done as much as I was able. I pray that your honor would be pleased with my work and be and remain my gracious lord and patron.

Erfurt, St. Martin’s Day, [November 11,] A.D. 1563.
Your honor’s willing servant,
Andreas Poach, at the Augustinian [church]

\[^{15}\text{On the Sadducees, see above, p. 36 n. 8 and, below, p. 103.}\]
At this season it is customary in our church to preach and meditate upon the article of our Christian faith concerning the resurrection of the dead. For it is right and proper that this article should be emphasized and expounded at this time. Since we preached and heard the article about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, it is proper that after Easter we should preach and hear the article on the resurrection of the flesh, that is, our own resurrection. For our Lord Jesus Christ began the resurrection in His own body, but the resurrection is not completed unless we, too, are raised. Likewise, His suffering and death are not completed unless we come after Him and suffer and die with Him—as St. Paul says that he supplies in his flesh what is still lacking in afflictions in Christ, Colossians 1 [:24]—so also His resurrection is not yet brought to completion or fulfilled unless we follow after Him and rise from the dead. He is our Head; we are the members of His Body [Eph. 5:23, 30]. Therefore, after the resurrection of Christ, one must also preach about our own resurrection, since the two belong together in order that the resurrection may be complete.

St. Paul treats this article very powerfully in this chapter [1 Corinthians 15]. The reason was that certain know-it-alls16 had come into the church in Corinth, not only from among the Greeks, who sought after wisdom and

16 Klüglinge
regarded the Gospel as sheer foolishness, but also from among the Jews, such as the Sadducees and their disciples, who had accepted the Gospel and been baptized. Some of these were preachers and teachers in Christendom and yet still did not believe that there was a resurrection of the dead. They claimed that a man, when he dies, falls dead as a tree falls, and dies as a cow and the irrational animals die, which were created only for this life and who have nothing more to await when this life ends. They were hale fellows who thought nothing of the resurrection of the dead and of the life to come, and who scorned and mocked the Christians who did believe this. So, too, in our day, the pope together with his cardinals and bishops, and the worldly wise together with their highly knowledgeable and sharp-witted wise men, think nothing of the article that there will be a resurrection of the flesh and an eternal life. And they know how to laugh at us contemptuously and to mock us for believing such a thing.

It is against such know-it-alls—these people who are called good Christians and who even wanted to be esteemed as outstanding teachers and indeed the best preachers after the apostles, and who boasted of an exalted spirit—that St. Paul opposes himself with all his might. Paul places the article of the resurrection upon the firmest foundation, forcefully shutting the mouth of these know-it-alls, so that he may preserve the genuine Christians steadfast in the right and pure faith in this article. He does this so that they will not be led astray or deceived through such poison and senseless babbling of reason and human wisdom as presumes to sit as master over the articles of faith.

Shortly before this, [Paul] proves this article concerning the resurrection of the dead by means of the chief article of Christian doctrine, which no one can deny if he wants to be a Christian—to say nothing of a preacher of the Gospel of Christ. He includes our resurrection in the resurrection of Christ, proving one article with another, saying: “If Christ is preached as having risen from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ, too, is not risen” [1 Cor. 15:12–13]. He means that Christ is our Head, and we are His Body and members of His Body. Now, a head cannot be without its body and members if it is to be a proper, living head. If we were not going to rise from the dead, it would follow that Christ also had not risen from the dead. But since Christ is risen from the dead, as we preach and believe, it follows that we must also rise from the dead.

---

17 On the Sadducees as deniers of the resurrection, see above, p. 36 n. 8; cf. the sermon of August 5, 1545, below, p. 247.

18 See below, p. 247 n. 24.
Therefore, whoever believes and confesses Christ’s resurrection must also believe and confess our resurrection. And again, whoever denies our resurrection also denies the resurrection of Christ—indeed the entire Gospel as well and everything that is preached concerning Christ. What good does it do, then, if someone accepts the Gospel, boasts that he is a Christian, and has himself baptized, if he says that there is no resurrection? Let him just as well deny everything and say there is no Gospel, no Baptism, no Christ, and no God.

We are the ones for whose sake Christ is risen from the dead. He did not rise from the dead for Himself and for His own person. Just as He suffered, was crucified, and died not for His own sake, but rather for our sake, so also He rose from the dead not for His own sake but for ours. Now if Christ’s resurrection took place for our sake, then we must also come after Him and rise from the dead just as Christ is risen from the dead, so that the resurrection may be full and complete. For when a body rises from the dead, it is necessary that it rise with all its members and leave none of them behind.

Now, after [Paul] has proved and confirmed this article concerning the resurrection of the dead with the chief article of Christian doctrine—that is, with the resurrection of Christ—he refutes several objections and questions of those who deny this article and gives a further demonstration of this article from creatures and the creation. For the highly learned know-it-alls who deny this article dispute subtly on the basis of reason about how it could be possible for the dead to rise again. They measure the resurrection of the dead and the life to come according to their piggish heads, as if the resurrection of the dead and eternal life had to be just like this life on earth. Then they became more clever still, saying, “What kind of existence would it be if the dead were to be raised and live again?”

In the same way, the pagan Pliny mocked and ridiculed this article, saying: “There are certain rascals” (that is what he calls the Christians) “who say that once people have died, they will be made alive again. What sense does that make? Where will all these people live if they are all made alive again? Therefore, the claim is nothing but sheer puerile foolishness.” 19 That is how the Corinthians, too, ridiculed this article, saying: “Say, how is it possible for the dead to rise again? What kind of bodies will we have after the resurrection of the dead? Where will there be space for all of us? Where would we all eat and drink, keep a house and property, or take wives?” The Sadducees set forth a similar [question] for Christ: whether a woman who had had seven husbands here would have the same seven husbands there as well [Matt. 22:23–33]. They, too, measure the future life according to their

reason and according to this life. “If everyone who dies is raised again,” they asked, “where will there be enough room for us all? Or will a man perhaps become the size of a flea?” The Corinthians had plenty of this foolish thinking derived from clever reason. They beat this into the ears of the people until they were full of this and misled the Christians into thinking that they should not believe there would be a resurrection of the dead.

St. Paul dismisses such objections and questions and refutes them with parables drawn from nature.20 “You fool,” he says, “are you asking how it is possible that the dead are raised? Every day before your eyes things happen to many creatures that are just as impossible according to reason as the resurrection of the dead. ‘What you sow does not come to life unless it dies’” [1 Cor. 15:36]. He takes this parable of the seed and applies it to the resurrection of the dead, just as Christ did with the kernel of wheat in John 12 [:24]. He means that there is no life until the seed has died and decayed in the ground. In the same way, this mortal, corruptible body (as it now lives) will not come to life unless it dies and decays in the ground. “Now, you are not such a fool that you would say it is impossible for the seed to grow again and come to life, even though it has been cast into the earth and died. Why do you say, then, that it is impossible for dead bodies that have been buried in the ground to rise again and be brought to life?

“Again, you ask how the dead are raised and what kind of body they will have. You fool! Consider the seed. ‘What you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, of wheat or of some other grain’” [1 Cor. 15:37]. The same applies to the human body. In its essence, it is the very same body that will rise. But in regard to its form it is not the body that will be, but is a wrinkled, corruptible, dead body, just as the other is a bare, dry, wrinkled seed. However, God will give it a fresh, beautiful, living, incorruptible body, which will no longer need to eat, drink, die, decay, etc. In the same way, He gives the bare, dry seed a beautiful, green body, which is not a bare seed lying upon the ground dry and dead, but has its own form, color, sap, and life, and grows, blooms, and becomes green like a forest. And just as God gives every seed its own body in such a way that a kernel of wheat does not produce a barley stalk, nor a barley seed a stalk of rye, even if it is mixed with other seeds in the field, in the same way He will give each and every human being his own body. He will do this in such a way that in the resurrection a man’s body will not become a woman’s body nor a woman’s body a man’s body. Rather what was created as a human being will remain a human being, whether man or woman, each according to his own nature and kind, even though the form and the use of the body will be different.

20 This paragraph and the following one, on analogies to the resurrection from nature, have no parallel in S. Cf. Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15 (1532–33/1534), LW 28:174–75.
Therefore, the apostle includes this article concerning the resurrection in the article on creation and again proves one article with another. It is as if he said: “Whoever has the Word of God—that there is a resurrection of the dead—and believes and confesses that God, who spoke this Word, is the almighty Father and Creator of heaven and earth, as children pray in the Creed, and that the seed in the field together with all creation is a good example and testimony of this, will also believe and confess that there is a resurrection of the dead. But whoever denies that there is a resurrection of the dead also denies that God is the almighty Creator of heaven and earth and that God spoke this Word concerning the resurrection of the dead.” Whoever confesses this article—that God is almighty—does not dispute or reason cleverly about whether or not it is possible for the dead to be raised, seeing that here is the Word of God saying that it is so. But whoever disputes and asks how it is possible for the dead to rise shows clearly enough with such disputing and questioning that he has no faith, not believing that it is God’s Word and that God is almighty.

And the truth is that if this *principium* (that is, this foundation and chief article) stands—that God is the almighty Creator of all creatures—then it follows incontestably and undeniably that for God all things are possible [Matt. 19:26]. If this same almighty Creator speaks a word, then it must come to pass and cannot be prevented. Even if all reason should raise questions here, it must confess and say: “If it is true that God is almighty, then nothing can be proposed that would be impossible for Him.” Here, therefore, all the objections of clever reason are silenced, and the article concerning the resurrection follows as a solid and valid conclusion from the article on creation.

God says in His Word that the dead shall rise. God, who says this, is an almighty God and Creator of heaven and earth and of all creatures. Therefore, the resurrection must come to pass and cannot be prevented, because God has spoken it. Otherwise, He would not be an almighty God and Creator.

We should mark this well, so that we may learn to ground and strengthen our faith in the article of the resurrection with the article concerning the creation and the omnipotence of God, in opposition to all subtle arguments of reason and against every temptation. For from this *principium* (that is, the foundation and chief article), the dear patriarchs grounded and strengthened their faith in the article of the resurrection of the dead and that for God nothing that He has spoken is impossible.

---

21 The First Article of the Apostles’ Creed (Kolb-Wengert, p. 21; *Concordia*, p. 16). On its identification with children, see below, p. 208 n. 3.

22 *Veter*, possibly “[church] fathers,” but likely an anticipation of the following account of the patriarchs.
Abraham had the promise that the Seed by which all peoples on the earth would be blessed would be named in Isaac [Gen. 21:12]. Then God tested Abraham and commanded him, saying that he should sacrifice his son Isaac, on whom the promise stood, as a burnt offering. That is, he was to slaughter him and to burn him to ashes with fire. For a burnt offering was when something was completely consumed with fire. There are two contradictory statements here: “In Isaac shall the Seed be named” and “Isaac is to be burned and brought to dust and ashes.” And reason can never reconcile or resolve such incommensurable and contradictory statements.

But Abraham clings to the Word and believes the promise. Even if Isaac should be burned to ashes, nevertheless the promise must be fulfilled and Isaac will be brought to life again out of the ashes. For God has spoken it, and nothing is impossible for Him, because He is almighty. In this way, Abraham founded his faith in the resurrection upon God’s Word and omnipotence, for which Scripture praises him. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he yielded his only-begotten son, of whom it had already been said, ‘In Isaac shall your Seed be named.’ And he considered that God was also able to raise from the dead, and consequently he did receive Isaac back, as a figure” [Heb. 11:17–19].

For reason, what is proposed to Abraham is something laughable: that Abraham should offer Isaac and yet believe that from Isaac the Seed would be born who would bring blessing. Reason says here: “Abraham, you are mad and deluded to believe this. What sense does this make? Your Seed is supposed to be named in Isaac, and Isaac is supposed to become ashes. How can the Seed come from the ashes of your son?” But Abraham would not let such thoughts from reason lead him astray. Rather, he said: “Very well. Let me be mad and deluded. Even if I sacrifice my son Isaac as a burnt offering, as God commanded me, nevertheless God has said, ‘In Isaac shall the Seed be named.’ Since He said this, it must come to pass and cannot be prevented. For God is almighty. Did He not give me this son from the old, barren Sarah? This is certainly just as difficult and impossible for reason as it is that dead ashes should live. If God was able to give me this son from the dying body of the barren Sarah, then He is able out of the ashes to make Isaac just as living and active as he is now.” Abraham relied on the [faith] that God is almighty and that He can and is willing to do it because He has so spoken. Such faith pleased God so much that He made him the father of many nations.

Adam believed this too. He had the promise concerning Christ, that Christ would conquer sin, death, and hell and would redeem men from the power of the devil and save them. As the promise says, “The Seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent” [Gen. 3:15]. Adam, along with

---

23 Reading Same as StL 8:1286 proposes instead of Name in the printed text.
all his descendants, clung to this promise, believing and hoping that death would be taken from him and that he would live. But when he heard this word:

24 “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return” [Gen. 3:19], he must have thought: “Today I live; tomorrow I die. And when I die, the worms will devour me, and I will become dust.” As we have seen in our own experience, this word is powerfully fulfilled every day throughout the world. For everything that is Adam (that is, man) eventually dies and becomes dust, earth, and decay.

These two sayings are also opposed to each other: “Adam will be freed from death through the woman’s Seed and will live” and, on the other hand, “Adam will die and become dust.” Now reason can never reconcile these two incommensurable sayings together and make them agree. But Adam reconciles them in this way: he clings to the Word of the promise concerning Christ with steadfast faith in his heart and believes that he will live, even if he dies. In such faith, he lives and dies. Even in death, he holds fast to the hope that he will live. He could have thought, in accordance with reason: “What will come of it? Shall I live even though I become dust? How is that possible? Who will bring to life those who have been devoured by worms?” But he does not think like this. Rather, he clings to the Word of promise: “The Seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent,” and so he says: “Because God, who spoke this word, is almighty and made everything out of nothing, just as I have learned and experienced in the creation of all creatures, I believe that He can also bring a human being back to life even if he has died. If God created me out of dust, then He can also raise me up from the dust and bring me back out of death.”

Therefore, in this article of the resurrection of the dead nothing matters except that we learn to pray with the young children: “I believe in God the Father, almighty Creator of heaven and earth,”25 and say: “God has said that I will rise from the dead. There is His Word: ‘This is the will of the one who sent Me, that whoever sees the Son and believes in Him has everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the Last Day’ [John 6:40]. Because God has said this—and He is God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth—I have no doubt that it will happen. For nothing is impossible for Him. He cannot lie.” If we do this, we have no doubt about the article of the resurrection. For whoever believes that God is the almighty Creator of heaven and earth also

24 S. “sermon”

believes that He is able to raise the dead. But if we doubt this, it is a sure sign that we still lack the faith [that is taught to] children. 26 Whoever disputes and doubts the article on the resurrection does not believe that God is the almighty Creator of all creatures. In fact, he does not believe at all! For since he does not believe in God's work—that God can and will raise the dead just as His Word says—neither does he believe in God's power, might, majesty, and glory, and thus, in truth, he denies God altogether, because he denies His work.

What is wrong with our modern-day fanatics and sectarians, the Anabaptists and perverters of the Sacrament, 27 except that they neither know nor want to know the children's Creed: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” “Ah, what is water?” the Anabaptists say. “Water is water. How is it possible that water should wash men from sins and save them from death?” These people do not believe that there is a God, for they deny His work. They certainly hear the words with their ears and speak them with their mouths: “I believe in God the almighty Maker.” But in their hearts they do not believe it. For since He Himself says, “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved” [Mark 16:16], and for Him all things are possible as the only almighty Creator of all things, how, then, is it impossible for the water in the Word to be able to purify men from sins and save them? Certainly, “nothing is impossible for God,” as the angel Gabriel said to Mary [Luke 1:37].

Indeed, the same might be said of other articles of our Christian faith. “How is it possible that God should become man and be born of a woman—and, what is more, without a man's seed, by the Holy Spirit alone, from a pure virgin? Again, how is it possible that a virgin should be pregnant and bear a son? A virgin cannot be a mother, and a mother cannot be a virgin.” Reason says, “These things do not go together: virginity and motherhood, the chastity of a maiden and the works of a mother, such as giving birth to a child, nursing, etc.” And true it is! Reason can never make the two agree. But

26 es uns noch feilet am Kinder glauben
27 Sacramentschendern, i.e., “Sacramentarians” such as Zwingli, Karlstadt, and their followers, who rejected the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. For Luther’s controversy with the Anabaptists, who rejected infant Baptism, see the sermon of January 10, 1546, below, p. 395; Luther’s letter to Melanchthon, January 13, 1522, LW 48:364–72; and Concerning Rebaptism (1528), LW 40:225–62. On his dispute with the Sacramentarians, see Against the Heavenly Prophets (1525), LW 40:79–223; The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ (1526), LW 36:335–361; This Is My Body (1527), LW 37:13–150; Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper (1528), LW 37:161–372; Marburg Colloquy (1529), LW 38:3–89; and Brief Confession (1544), LW 38:287–319. Luther grouped these together with radical spiritualists such as Thomas Münzer under the epithet of “fanatics” [Schwärmer] or “Enthusiasts”—those who rejected the spiritual power of the external Word or Sacraments.
faith reconciles them with each other and says: “You fool! God is almighty. Therefore, all things are possible for Him.”

Karlstadtl failed on this point as well. “I will never let myself be convinced,” he said, “to believe that God opens heaven and lowers His Son down and closes Him up in bread, so that He is distributed in the Sacrament.”29 That is what unbelief does. But what is the cause of such unbelief? The cause is this: man does not consider God to be almighty. For even reason can recognize that if one grants that God is almighty, then one must also grant that everything that God says can and must come to pass. So, then, if God is almighty and created the heavens and the earth, will it be impossible for Him that the bread should be Christ’s body and the wine Christ’s blood? For there stands His Word, which He speaks: “Take, eat. This is My body” and “Drink of it all of you. This is My blood of the new testament which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” [Matt. 26:26–28].30

Now, if the baker were to say to me: “Take, eat. This bread is my body,” and if the wine steward were to say to me: “Take, drink. This wine is my blood,” then I, too, would say: “You are lying. How is that possible?” Indeed, if the priest himself were to attempt this on the basis of his own imagination and speak his own words to that effect, I would say to him also: “Be quiet! You are lying.” But here it is not a baker nor a wine steward, not a priest nor a bishop, but rather it is almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who institutes and ordains the Sacrament,31 saying: “Take and eat. This is My body which is given for you; this is the cup, the new testament in My blood which is poured out for you.” Who said this? Not a [mere] man, but God, who made heaven and earth out of nothing. You should consider who it was who spoke this word—not “How is it possible?” but “Who spoke these words?” It was no baker, wine steward, or priest, but rather God’s eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I say, the only place where the sectarians and fanatics go wrong is that they do not believe that God is almighty. If they did believe this, they would not dispute and question how it is possible. They forget God and His almighty power and babble on, saying: “Water is water. Bread is bread. Wine is wine. How is it possible for bread to be Christ’s body and for

28 Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541), formerly Luther’s colleague and supporter at the University of Wittenberg, had come to oppose Luther in 1521–22, favoring the destruction of images and rejecting the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. After being expelled from Saxony, he had become a professor of Hebrew at Basel, where he died in 1541. On the controversy in Wittenberg following his death, see the introduction above, pp. 93–94.

29 See Against the Heavenly Prophets (1525), LW 40:216.

30 Cf. the Small Catechism (1529) VI (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 362–63; Concordia, p. 343).

31 S. “But in the Sacrament, God is the Creator and Ordainer.”
wine to be Christ’s blood?” We know this, too, and do not have to learn from the fanatics for the very first time that water is water, bread is bread, and wine is wine. But here you must not look at the water, the bread, or the wine, but rather the almighty Speaker, who says, “Unless one is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” [John 3:5]. Likewise: “Take, eat. This is My body.” “Take, drink. This is My blood” [Matt. 26:26–28]. You must not let this Speaker out of your sight, if you want to remain in the true faith and understanding of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Look at the creation of all creatures. “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth” [Gen. 1:1]. Through what? Through His Word, as Moses writes: “God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’ God said, ‘Let there be a firmament between the waters,’ etc. And it was so. God said, ‘Let the waters under heaven be gathered in separate places, so that dry land can be seen.’ And it was so” [Gen. 1:3–9]. It is the speaking that does it. When this Speaker speaks His will, it must come to pass. Now, if God has created heaven and earth and all creatures out of nothing simply by His speaking, how should He not also be able to accomplish through His Word and Sacrament whatever He wants, especially since His Word stands there and bears witness of this?

Now, if a sectarian, an Anabaptist, a perverter of the Sacrament, or a fanatic comes along and starts babbling on the basis of reason, saying: “The priest takes the child in his hand and sprinkles it with water; takes bread and wine for the Sacrament, speaks the words and distributes it to the people there with his hand; lays his hand on the people and absolves them—how can this give salvation? I see water there, bread and wine, and a man’s hand. How can water save? How can a sinful hand forgive sins?” then you should be prepared and say: “My dear man, you must not look at the hand of the priest, but rather at the Speaker whose Word it is that you hear in Baptism, Absolution, and the Sacrament.” This Speaker says, “Go therefore and teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit” [Matt. 28:19]. Again: “Receive the holy Spirit. Those whose sins you remit, they are remitted” [John 20:22–23]. Again: “Eat; this is My body. Drink; this is My blood. Do this in remembrance of Me” [Luke 22:19–20]. Now, whatever this Speaker says must come to pass. Even if He uses water, bread, wine, or the hand of a man as instrument and token, 32 He still says that it is His work. Whatever human beings do here according to His Word and command, He wills to do Himself.

32 Instrument und Warzeichen; S: “instrument and tool [werkzeug].” Luther used the word Wahrzeichen, “token,” not in the sense of a sign of something absent but as a mark or token of something else that is present; see, e.g., Glossae D. Martini Lutheri super sententias patrum de controversiâ coenae exhibitas ipsi a D. Philippo Melanchthonе (1534/1681–97), WA 38:302–10.
This Speaker is almighty and created all creatures out of nothing; He is also truthful. Since we have His Word in Baptism, Absolution, and the Sacrament, we should not doubt, but rather believe with certainty that whatever the Word tells us shall come to pass. For with Him, nothing is impossible—and He cannot lie. Although we see the poor, sinful hand of the priest, we should not let this lead us astray. It is the will of this Speaker to trample down the devil with his kingdom in such a way that even the hand of a man is able to tear men out of his jaws through Baptism, through Absolution, through the Word and Sacrament. Now, since this is not man’s word and work, but rather the Word and work of God, who is almighty and cannot lie, we should therefore be certain that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. For what the priest does here according to God’s command, God Himself does.

Therefore, I say that the sectarians and fanatics who refuse to believe that Baptism works the forgiveness of sins, that bread and wine in the Sacrament are Christ’s body and blood, and that Absolution unlocks heaven—they have not even begun to sound out the letters in this article in the children’s Creed: “I believe in God the almighty Creator.” Because of this, they cannot keep any other article of Christian doctrine pure. For whoever does not believe that God is almighty is also unable to believe that Baptism is a holy bath for the forgiveness of sins, that bread and wine in the Sacrament are Christ’s body and blood—he cannot even believe that God became man and that a virgin is the mother of God. The article that God is almighty preserves all the other articles. When this article falls, all other articles fall too.

Was it not an impossible thing that God promised to Abraham—that a son would be born to him from his wife, Sarah? They were both old and full of days; Abraham was almost a hundred years old, Sarah ninety. Sarah had lost the ability to conceive, as women well know. It was just as impossible for a child to be born from a log or a stone as from Abraham and Sarah. Yet Abraham did not waver in the face of such impossibilities, since he had God’s Word and promise. Rather, he believed firmly that the promised son would be born from such an old, rotten stump and log, and St. Paul points to this faith as an example in Romans 4[:19–21]: “Abraham did not become weak in faith. Neither did he look upon his own body, which was already dead, since he was almost a hundred years old, nor upon the dead body of Sarah. For he did not doubt the promise of God through unbelief but instead was strong in faith, gave God the glory, and knew with all certainty that whatever God promises He is also able to do.”

However, we cannot convince our own Sadducees, the Sacrament-fanatics, of this—that they should learn to base their faith concerning the Lord’s Supper upon the Word and upon the omnipotence of God. The
glorious thoughts of faith (thinking that since God has spoken it and is almighty, therefore He is also able and willing to do it) they cast out of the heart and follow instead the shameful thoughts of human reason: “How can bread be Christ’s body? How can wine be His blood?” And they dispute subtly de loco, de locato, and de creatura, and abandon God’s Word and omnipotence. We must leave such Sadducees to their cleverness, because they will not have it any other way. Meanwhile, we must hold fast to the Word that Christ speaks: “Eat; this is My body. Drink; this is My blood.” We must give Him the honor and believe that He can and will do it, since He has promised it and is almighty.

That is what St. Paul is driving at here concerning the article of the resurrection of the dead in opposing all the disputations and clever thoughts of reason. For also disputes how it is possible for the dead body to come forth again and [be] made to live. They see the great power of death, just like all men on earth who die and are devoured by worms. Since they put out of their sight the omnipotence of God and cannot believe that on the Last Day our body will rise and be restored to life, they therefore dispute, investigate, and ask how the dead will rise and with what kind of body they will come [1 Cor. 15:35]. St. Paul replies, saying: “Dispute as you will, but for me, this article is certain. For I have on my side God’s omnipotence, His Word and promise, and also the example of all creation—that God created all things from nothing. Now, since God has said that the dead will be raised—and God is almighty—how, then, could this be impossible?”

What is God still doing continually every day? Look right in front of you! A man is born from a small drop of blood, which is just as great a miracle of God as if God were awakening children from stones. As St. Paul says in Acts 17 [:26]: “God has brought it about that from one blood the whole human race has come to dwell upon the earth.” At bottom, the truth is that a human being is born from a tiny droplet of human blood and seed, it is just as if a human being were to spring from a stone and stand in our midst and say, “Here stands a man.” This is a greater sign and miracle than when Adam was made from a clump of dirt and Eve from a rib bone. Since God still today accomplishes things just as great and greater and thus demonstrates His omnipotence, so that nothing is impossible for Him, how, then, will it be impossible for Him to raise the dead?

---

33 “concerning the place, concerning the thing in the place, and concerning the creature.” Cf. the arguments in the Marburg Colloquy (1529), LW 38:15–85.

For this reason we should learn to pray the children's Creed aright, and learn to call our God the almighty Creator of heaven and earth in earnest, so that we believe that whatever He says He both can and shall accomplish. For He still demonstrates this daily with respect to our own body and soul. All the angels in heaven are unable to create one single human being. They are unable to create a human body, let alone the soul. God, on the other hand, creates both, body and soul, without our thinking about it—indeed even contrary to our thoughts and reason. We see this happening daily before our very eyes. Indeed, we experience it in ourselves. Yet we want to dispute and raise a lot of questions about whether what God, our almighty Creator, has promised is possible. Well, then, have your disputation in the devil's name! Is it not sin and shame for a man to presume to judge the articles of faith (which are solely a matter of God's omnipotence and His Word and promise) according to blind nature?

It is impossible for angels in heaven to comprehend the work of God, even though they constantly look upon these things with great desire [1 Pet. 1:12]. They marvel over such things, but they are not able to fathom them or measure them with their thoughts. What Job says in Job 9 [:10] remains true: “God does great things, which are beyond investigation, and wonders without number.” And we poor, miserable men want to plumb the depths of God's work and the mystery of faith and comprehend them with our wretched reason and blind thoughts.

Anabaptists and the Sacrament-fanatics dispute about the Lord's Supper, saying: “The baker cannot make the bread be body, and the wine steward cannot make the wine be blood. How is it then possible that the bread in the Supper could be Christ's body and the wine His blood?” Well, then, do not conduct your disputation in God's name! Such fanatics should not even be given bread to eat—those who want to measure and circumscribe God's Word and work according to their foolish mind. Is this not a fine deduction: “The baker cannot make bread to be body, and the wine steward cannot make wine to be blood; therefore, Christ cannot accomplish it either, that bread and wine in the Lord's Supper should be His body and blood.” What do you think of a teacher like this?

So, learn now, whoever can learn, to ground your faith on God's Word, promise, and omnipotence and to set these against all disputations and questions based on reason. If the know-it-alls come and dispute and question on the basis of reason concerning the article of the resurrection of the dead, set God's Word and omnipotence against them and say: “Even if I die, God will raise me from the earth and will again bring me forth from dust, so that I will shine like the sun [Matt. 13:43]. I have no doubt of this. He is almighty and is able to do it. He has also promised this in His Word and wants to do it.
Therefore, I believe that it will certainly happen. He will certainly bring me forth from the grave on the Last Day. This I believe without any doubt, and I will depart joyfully in this faith on the basis of His Word and omnipotence.”

If the Sacrament-fanatics come and start disputations out of their own dizzied brains and say, “How can it be that the bread in the Lord’s Supper is Christ’s body and the wine is His blood?”—against this set God’s Word and omnipotence and say: “Listen, fanatic, shut your mouth, and do not ask how this can be. For we are not disputing here about bakers and wine stewards, but, on the contrary, we are dealing with God’s Word and Sacrament. God, who established, ordained, instituted, and commanded it, is almighty and truthful. Therefore, it can very well indeed be the case that the bread in the Lord’s Supper is Christ’s body and the wine is His blood.” Here applies what St. Paul says in Titus 1 [:2]: “God, who promised this, cannot lie.”

“But,” says reason, “how can I believe that I will be brought forth again from the earth? When I die, I will decay and become nothing. How can anything come of what has decayed into nothing? Moreover, my body will stink so awfully once it is dead that it will repulse everyone, and the grubs and worms will come and devour it with glee. What can come from something that is nothing but stench and filth?” Answer: Indeed, insofar as it pertains to human power, everything is lost and nothing will come of such a dead, decaying, stinking body. It will remain in death, stench, and worms forever, so far as human power is concerned, even if all human power were fused into a single heap. But listen. You should not look at the power of men and what it can do, much less should you look to the power of the dead body as it lies in stench among worms, but rather you must look at God’s Word and power, for He alone can do it and wills to do it.

When a man is finally lying in a coffin and is buried beneath the earth, then all men, and indeed all creatures, must confess and say, “We are unable to raise this dead body and bring it back to life.” But God has said: “What no creature can do, I can do as the almighty Creator. This dead body will be raised and brought back to life again, even if it has already decayed and rotted in the earth. I, the almighty God and Creator, am willing and able to do this. Here stands My Word: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you. The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will live’” [John 5:25]. And soon thereafter: “The hour is coming in which all who are in their graves will hear His voice and will come forth again—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” [John 5:28–29].

Therefore, in this article on the resurrection we should abandon all thoughts of reason, since not only do the Holy Scriptures demonstrate but creation, too, convinces us that with God nothing is impossible. We should
neither dispute nor question how the dead will be raised or with what kind of body they will return. Rather, we should give attention to the One who is able and willing to do this. This One is neither an angel nor a mere man, but rather God’s only Son, who made all things out of nothing. “He is the firstborn before all creatures. Through Him has been made everything that is in heaven and on the earth” (Colossians 1:15–16). “He upholds all things with His powerful Word” (Hebrews 1:3). He is able and willing to do this, as He Himself has said, “As the Father raises the dead and brings them back to life, even so the Son gives life to whom He will” (John 5:21).

Six thousand years ago, the world was nothing. Now, who was it that made the world? Read the Scriptures, which will tell you who made it. Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John 1:1, 3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him. Without Him nothing was made that has been made.” Hebrews 1:2: “In these last days, God has spoken to us by his Son, whom He has appointed as heir over all things, through whom also He made the world.” What were you a thousand or even a hundred years ago? Nothing. Who created you? Listen to the First Article in the children’s Creed. How do you pray it? “I believe that God has made me and all creatures,” etc. This God and Creator is also able to raise you from the dead. He wants to do it and is able to do it. He is almighty and has promised this to you. Therefore, rely upon Him. He will not lie to you. If He has already done the greatest thing, He will also do the smallest thing hereafter.36

And just as we must and should treat this article of the resurrection, so also should we treat the other articles of the Christian faith, whether of Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, etc. We should set reason entirely aside and say: “If God has spoken it, then it will surely come to pass. I have no doubt about that. For there stands His Word, which cannot lie, and He is almighty. Therefore, whatever He says cannot be prevented. It must come to pass. However, as has already been said, all that is lacking is that people fail to believe that God is almighty, so that He is able to do it, and that God has spoken it, so that He wants to do it.

| A Turk believes nothing and denies all the articles and principles of our faith. If you could convince a Turk to admit, believe, and confess this principle and foundation—that God is almighty and that God has spoken this—then he would also certainly admit the consequence that follows from the principle and foundation. He would say: “If God is able to do it and wills to do it, then it will certainly come to pass. If the first part is true, that it is

35 Small Catechism (1529) II 2 (Kolb-Wengert, p. 354; Concordia, p. 328).

36 I.e., God, who has already created the world from nothing, will also raise the dead.
God’s Word and promise and that God, who said this, is almighty, then the second part, which follows from the first, must certainly be true as well.”

If a Turk and unbeliever acts this way, why do those who call themselves Christians and believers not believe that what God has spoken in His Word must come to pass? People admit the first part as the principle, foundation, and chief article and refuse to admit the second, which follows from the principle and foundation. They confess that God is almighty and that this is God’s Word: “The dead will be raised” [John 5:28–29]. Again: “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved” [Mark 16:16]. Again: “Whatever you forgive on earth, that will also be forgiven in heaven” [John 20:23]. Again: “Eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This is My blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins” [Matt. 26:26–28]. They confess this and must confess this whether they want to or not. Nevertheless, they dispute: “How is it possible for the dead to rise? How is it possible for water to wash the soul from sins? How is it possible for me to be pronounced free of all sins through a man’s hand? How is it possible in the Lord’s Supper for the bread to be Christ’s body and the wine Christ’s blood?” Very well, then, go on disputing, you poor, miserable man! Are you not mad and senseless? You admit the principle and the chief article, and yet you deny the consequence of the principle and chief article. Thus you are testifying of yourself that you are either a scoffer who does not believe anything, or else you are a godless scoundrel who says “yes” and “no” in one and the same article.

That is how St. Paul strikes down and rejects all the objections of human reason here in this article on the resurrection of the dead. For reason wants to be clever here and raises many kinds of questions about how the dead rise: whether they eat, drink, sleep, wake, marry, and are given in marriage. St. Paul strikes down all such thoughts and questions with the example of God’s omnipotence and power, which he demonstrates from the creatures, in the seed in the field. It is as if the apostle wanted to say: “God has spoken it and is able to do it. Therefore, it will certainly come to pass. He will say on the Last Day: ‘Arise, you dead!’” That is the way that the dead will rise—the dead will rise through His Word. God will say, “Surgite qui jacetis in pulvere terrae,” [that is,] “Arise, you who lie under the earth.”

Therefore, you may neither dispute nor question how the dead are to rise. It will come to pass through the speaking of the Almighty.

Just as in other matters God accomplishes whatever He wants through His Word, so it is with the resurrection of the dead as well. In Baptism, God accomplishes His work through the Word, when He or the priest in His stead says, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

37 The Latin may be a combination of words attributed to St. Jerome (see below, p. 143 n. 31) and Dan. 12:2. It could not be found elsewhere in this exact form.
the Holy Spirit.” “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved” [Mark 16:16]. Through such speaking the one baptized is made a child of everlasting life and salvation. The same is true for the Lord’s Supper. How is it that the blessed bread is Christ’s body and the blessed wine is Christ’s blood? It happens through the Word. Christ says: “Eat; this is My body. Drink; this is My blood.” See, that is the way it happens: whoever eats the bread eats Christ’s body and whoever drinks the wine drinks Christ’s blood. Likewise with Absolution, how is it that through the key of loosing heaven is opened and hell is shut?38 How can a human being forgive sins? It happens through the Word that the priest, or Christ speaking through the priest, says: “Through the merit, suffering, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ and by His command, I pronounce you acquitted, free, and released from all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”39 This Word does it, because it is Christ’s Word and command, as He says, “Whatever you will forgive on earth shall also be forgiven in heaven” [Matt. 18:18].

Now here is the sum of all this: we should learn to pray and understand our children’s Creed aright, to which we are pledged in Baptism that we should confess it and stand firm in it, when we say: “I believe in God the Father, almighty Creator of heaven and earth.” That is, we should know that this is the chief article and foundation of all the articles of Christian doctrine. Whoever affirms the chief article must also affirm the other articles: concerning the resurrection of the dead, Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, etc. Whoever denies the other articles or disputes about how they could be possible has also denied the main article, namely, God’s omnipotence, and, indeed, has denied His majesty and His divinity as well. For they all hang together like a chain, and the articles are linked together and follow one from the other. May our dear Lord preserve us in the correct understanding of the Creed and, as St. Peter says [2 Pet. 1:16], graciously protect us from all the subtle disquisitions and clever fables of human reason. Amen.

---


39 S: “I forgive you all [your] sins, by Christ’s command, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”