

Jesus' Humiliation in *He Descended into Hell*

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Introduction

“He descended into Hell” [hereafter referred as *Descendit*¹] is Article V of the modern *Apostles' Creed* [hereafter referred as *Credo*²]. The evolution and references of this phrase throughout Christian history is very dynamic, and influences its theological interpretation. This essay will examine the article summarising the historic evolution, presenting major theological perspectives. It will achieve this with a perspective of Christ's humiliation and atonement. In the interest of comprehension while maintaining brevity, the author's Biblical evaluations of this phrase is available online as a **companion to this essay**³. It details the modern Reformed perspective and includes the author's translations and exegesis of specific passages referred throughout this essay.

Historical Development of *He Descended into Hell*

There had been a series of creeds used by the first century church, especially to profess faith before Baptism. Many of the statements of profession were collated into recognised historic creeds (eg. the *Old Roman Creed*) by the fourth century⁴. The earliest extant record of the *Descendit* in the *Credo* is in a letter (340-360AD) by *Julius of Rome* to the Arian *Marcellus of Ancyra*, translated from Greek to Latin by Tyrannius Rufinus (390AD). It was **only one of two works** (*Expositio Symboli*) that Rufinus incorporates this phrase. Rufinus commented in this work, that it may have been determined by the Apostles after Pentecost, before leaving Jerusalem, hence the assigned epithet, *Apostles' Creed*⁵. It is worthy to note, that the *Credo* was not endorsed by any œcumenical council (unlike the *Nicene* and *Chalcedonian Creeds*, for instance), but evolved from ~200-750AD.

It is contentiously alleged that Rufinus misinterpreted the intended Arian phrase to instead mean the orthodox Christ was in the *grave* (ᾍδης *Hades*), not *hell/place of eternal torment* (γέεννα *Gehenna*)⁶. Subsequent works examining this phrase proceed from this where many theologians of Christendom have addressed this statement for and against, “Did Christ actually descend into hell?”, or alternate interpretations

¹ *Descendit* = Latin “He descended” will be the diminutive of the phrase “He descended into Hell/Dead” throughout this essay.

² *Credo* = Latin “I believe”, will be the diminutive to represent the *Apostles' Creed* throughout this essay.

³ Duffy, J.G. (2020) *Reformed Scriptural Analyses of He Descended into Hell*.

<https://johnduffy.net.au/academic%20notes/Reformed%20Scriptural%20Analyses%20of%20He%20Descended%20into%20Hell.pdf>

⁴ Wilson, L. J. (2018, October 11). *Creedal Christians: The Apostle's Creed*. That Ancient Faith.

<https://www.thatancientfaith.uk/home/perma/1539286980/article/creedal-christians-the-apostles-creed.html>

Philip Schaff: *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes. Volume I. The History of Creeds*. - Christian Classics
Ethereal Library. (n.d.). ccel.Org. Retrieved September 26, 2020, from

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1/creeds1.iv.ii.html#fnf_iv.ii-p58.1

Grudem, W. (2007). *Systematic Theology: an introduction to Biblical doctrine*. Inter-Varsity. 583-587.

⁵ Wilson, L. J. (2018). *Creedal Christians: The Apostle's Creed*.

Grudem, W. (2007). *Systematic Theology: an introduction to Biblical doctrine*. 585.

Church Fathers: Commentary on the Apostles' Creed (Rufinus). www.newadvent.org.

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2711.htm>

⁶ Grudem, W. (2007). *Systematic Theology: an introduction to Biblical doctrine*. Inter-Varsity. 586.

Philip Schaff: *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes*. <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1/creeds1.iii.ii.html>

of the phrase.

The “Christian” concept of the *Descendit* is an ancient notion and embellished through the first couple of centuries, with gleanings from Greco-Roman mythology. *Eusebius of Emesa* (c.300–c.360) contributes extensively to this point. Major contributions to *Descendit* theology will be chronologically sequenced in the following paragraphs.

The Gospel of Nicodemus (c.155AD?)⁷ is an apocryphal work that consists of a second part, *Acts of Pilate*, which details the account of two of the risen dead (Matt.27:52-52) and Jesus’ leading the Old Testament [OT] believers from Hell. The entire document is a collation of fragmentary manuscripts [MSS] from earlier Koine, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian and predominantly Latin sources allegedly authored by *Nicodemus* (Jhn.3:1-21) and *Pontius Pilate* (Matt.27:2). It is academically alleged to be the possible documents *Justin Martyr* addresses as heretical or gnostic in his *First Apology* (c.155AD), although this is speculative.

Certainly the Passion and Ressurrection (first part) were existent in the second century, however the *Descendit* (second part) doesn’t appear in any Oriental copies and is very rare in the Koine versions. It is prolific in the Latin MSS. Although the document appears orthodox (generally referring to most OT persons and quoting their canonical Scripture references), it introduces substantial Gnostic features not detailed in Canon at all.

The Acts of Pilate [Pilate] (or *Gospel of Nicodemus, Part II - The Descent into Hell*) outlines the narrative of resurrected sons [XVII] of Simeon (Luk.2:22-25), who were instructed not to tell anyone of their time in hell [XVIII:1]. It presents a range of famous people who quote their prophecies from the *Tenakh*, such as Isaiah (Is.9), Simeon (Luk.2:30-32), John the Baptist (Matt.3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11; Luk.3:21-22; Jhn.1:29-33), Adam, and his son, Seth (who provide extra-Biblical revelation of the incarnation of Christ) [XIX]. There is a Gnostic/mythological discussion of Satan as the “ruler” of *Tartarus* [XX], after which there is a “thunderous voice and spiritual cry” reciting Psalm 24:7-9⁸. There is a rapturous response from the ancient just (OT believers, not virtuous pagans) praising Christ with David (who endorses his Ps.24) and Isaiah (Is.18:4, 26:19) [XXI:2,3]. “Hell and death and their wicked masters” are terrified and acknowledge the holiness and justice of God [XXII:1], and Christ then trampled death, delivered Satan to hell, and drew Adam to Himself [XXII:2]. There is a magisterial sentence of Satan’s folly and what seems an acknowledgement that he had a Dualistic power over Christ (up to the point of the *Descendit*) [XXIII]. There follows Christ saving the ancient faithful by taking Adam’s hand, leads them out of Hell, and endorsed by statements from Habakkuk, Micheas (Micah?), Enoch, Elijah and the “robber from the cross” who is in *Paradise* [XXIV-XXVI]. The reminder of the document outlines the transfiguration of the two narrators and the investigation by Pilate. It provides in an fascinating view on ancient eschatology, however this paper is examining Christology from a foundational perspective and it’s influence on the *Descendit* doctrines.

⁷ James, M. R. (1924). *The Gospel of Nicodemus and Acts of Pilate*. Oxford.
https://www.masterandmargarita.eu/estore/pdf/esen002_nicodemus.pdf

⁸ Ps.24:7-9 in modern versions is Ps.23 in the *Septuagint* and *Vulgate*. This essay will use modern Scripture references.

Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (c.150-c.215AD)⁹, as a representative of classical academia (the *Didascalium*), valued Greek philosophies (particularly what is referred as modern *Neoplatonism*) based on the Wisdom of the Jewish prophets. He proposed that Christ preached to the souls in Hell, offering salvation to those who believe in him. He was indecisive regarding whether Jesus preached to all souls in Hell, or the Jews alone. He was convicted that if Christ didn't preach to the pagans, the apostles would when they arrived.

Origen of Alexandria's *Contra Celsum* (c.248AD), being a pupil of Clement, concurred with Christ preaching in hell. They both embraced the eventual restoration of all souls to God after a purifying ("purging") process, which was an heterodox doctrine of hell. This is especially outlined throughout his apology *against Celsus* in various detailed responses to his statements¹⁰.

Augustine of Hippo, the late fourth century Latin Father, further conjectured on the *Descendit*, whose views would be considered to authoritatively dominate Medieval theology. He postulated in his sermons on the *Credo* that Christ descended into hell to free "Adam, the Patriarchs, and the Prophets and all the just, who were held in that place for original sin." To those who sinned beyond the Adam's original sin, he considered to the tortures of a "lower region". He based this on Hos.13:14 interpreting *morsus* [Latin "bite" or "sting"] relating to Christ's liberating His elect from hell, and abandoning the *reprobate*¹¹. Unlike Clement and Origen, Augustine claimed that no one could be delivered from judgement after death, emphasising *Soli Fide, Solo Christo* (in his own terms). Augustine elaborates that before the *Resurrection* of Christ, the faith in a redeemer by the ancients was accounted as righteousness (Rom.4:1-25; Gal.4:21-5:1; Heb.11:8-10)¹². In various letters, Augustine mentioned in several letters he was of the opinion that the OT saints were not in heaven immediately from their death, based on the terms *Paradise* (Luk.23:43) and *Bosom of Abraham* (Luk.16:19-31). He didn't interpret the malefactor's *Paradise* to mean heaven, because of the non-canonical *Apostles' Creed* (which mentioned His body in the grave but His soul "descended into hell"). From this he speculated there must be at least two regions in hell - one lower area for tormented damned; one higher location for the ancient just to rest (Paradise). He also denied the Greek concept of virtuous pagans attain salvation, claiming that works were of no effect, without faith in Christ that saves. He continues in the *City of God*, that men should appreciate the way to salvation is a gift of God's mercy¹¹.

He changed his ideas throughout his life, and sometimes denied the *bosom of Abraham* as hell. Bishop Evodius mentioned Christ delivered Adam based on church tradition, not Scripture, and Augustine mentioned Adam and the Patriarchs were never in hell. He does however include them in other works as among those delivered from hell. In another letter regarding 3 Pt.3:18-21, he concedes the interpretation of

⁹ *Clement of Alexandria: Stromata*. (n.d.). ccel.org; Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from https://ccel.org/ccel/clement_alex/stromata/anf02.vi.iv.vi.vi.html. VI:6.

¹⁰ *Origen. Contra Celsus*. (248 C.E.). http://www.documenta-catholica.eu/d_0185-0254-%20Origene%20-%20Contra%20Celsus%20-%20EN.pdf. II:33.

¹¹ Turner, R. V. (1966). *Descendit Ad Inferos: Medieval Views on Christ's Descent into Hell and the Salvation of the Ancient Just*. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708637>

¹² *Church Fathers: City of God, Book X (St. Augustine)*. (n.d.). www.Newadvent.Org. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120110.htm>

Church Fathers: City of God, Book VII (St. Augustine). (n.d.). Wwww.Newadvent.Org. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120107.htm>

Christ preaching to the spirits in prison. His *On the Creed: A Sermon to the Catechumens* conspicuously omits reference to the *Descendit*¹³.

Overall, Augustine regarding *Descendit* and the souls of the Ancient Just may be summarised as Christ descended into hell. He loosed the sorrows that were unable to restrain Him, and released the elect. It was unnecessary for Christ to preach to all the souls in hell, because the elect had been exposed to the *Protoevangelium* and (later) Mosaic law, enabling salvation by faith before the resurrection. This was another foundation for the *Credo's Descendit* which would be expanded through the Middle Ages.

Gregory (I) the Great's *Homiliae in Hiezechielem* (592-593/560AD), another respected teacher and preacher on the threshold between Patristic and Medieval intellect, would introduce mystic ("allegorical"?) interpretations of *Descendit*. *Homilies in Ezekiel* provide a digression from previous thought, based on more symbolic features. They outlined Ezek. 1:1–4:3; 40 contain some of Gregory's most profound mystical teachings. They were revised eight years later. It is worthy to note he was not familiar with the original Bible languages, however his contributions were prolific and significant. It is often mentioned he followed Augustinian theology, and introduced to the church a coarse concept of purgatory and Christ's *Descendit*¹⁴.

According to Turner (1966), Gregory specifically endorsed Augustine's teachings (that only those who while alive were guarded by God's grace in faith) but added "good works". Unlike Augustine, Gregory was convinced that the elect and reprobate were both in hell, awaiting Christ's deliverance, but only the elect would be preached the gospel¹⁵. He drew from the works of Philastrius (who catalogued historic heresies), amongst whom was included Clement and Origen, pertaining to the the "heresy" that Christ would reveal Himself to everyone in hell and save those who embraced Him in perdition. Gregory essentially believed Christ descended into hell to free the ancients who anticipated the Messiah, and spent their lives in faith and good works. He didn't elaborate if this limited salvation to the Jews or included pagans.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was important in the clarification of *Descendit* using allegory to refute the *conceptualistic scholasticism* of Peter Abelard (1079-1142) on this and other matters¹⁶. Abelard's *Sic et Non* had discussed the majority consensus that Christ freed from hell only the elect that would believe He was the Messiah [the Yes], as opposed to the minority that endorsed Christ offered salvation to everyone in hell [the No]. Abelard, an advocate of pagan philosophy, oblivious to the limitations of reason over revelation, produced *Theologia Christiana* and *Epitome Theologiae Christianae*. These three works included orthodox and new controversial doctrines regarding the *Descendit*. *Yes and No* mentions Christ descended into hell to release Adam and the ancient just, but in the *Theologia Christiana* he promoted that pagan philosophers could attain knowledge of the Triune God by reasoning, sufficient to live a "virtuous life" towards the efficaciousness of the *Descendit*. Abelard's *Commentary on Romans* further demonstrated he

¹³ Philip Schaff: NPNF1-03. *On the Holy Trinity; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises* - Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (n.d.). ccel.org. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103/npnf103.iv.vii.x.html>

¹⁴ Douglas, J. D. (Ed.) (1996). *Who's Who in Christian History*. Tyndale. 286.

¹⁵ Turner (1966). *Descendit Ad Inferos*. 178.

¹⁶ Douglas (1996). *Who's Who in Christian History*. 2-3.

denied the traditional ransom doctrine. Abelard also questioned whether the devil had tormented Lazarus and the elect in the bosom of Abraham as he had the rich man in hell (Luk.16:19-31)?

Bernard responded against Abelard with a plethora of epistles and two larger tracts to many Christian leaders. Regarding the question of the diabolical torment of the elect in Hell, Bernard responded negatively based on *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness* (Gen.15:6) and *Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad* (Jhn.8:56). “Therefore even then the blood of Christ was bedewing Lazarus in order that he should not feel the flames; because he had believed on him who would suffer. So are we to think of all the saints of that time, that they were born, just as we are, under the power of darkness because of original sin, but they were rescued before they died and by nothing else but the blood of Christ.”¹⁷

He described the *bosom of Abraham* as a refuge of tranquility and refreshment for the souls of the blessed in hell, separated from the souls of the damned by a great chasm (Luk.16:26), was dark (Job10:21), but Christ descended there to shatter the doors of bronze and iron (Ps.107:16; Is.45:2) to release the prisoners (Is.42:7). A simplistic faith based on Scriptural allegory, without the need for philosophical reason.

Peter Lombard’s *Quator Libri Sententiarum* (c.1150), *The Four Books of Sentences*, became an essential theological reference of the Medieval period. It’s perspective on *Descendit* incorporated the allegory of Bernard with the dialectics of his mentor, Abelard, while maintaining orthodoxy. He wrote of Christ’s descent into the lower region to lead the souls of the ancient just into heaven. He endorsed the faith of the OT believers by analysing the adequacy of faith (Heb.11:6). Although this was sufficient in the OT period, the NT period requires faith based on the full premise of the *Credo*. He also studied whether the faith of the ancients was of revealed/open or veiled mystery. He concluded the faith was revealed to the Patriarchs and Prophets, but obscured to the population, like modern church members believe, but don’t understand the articles of the Creeds. This contrasts Augustine’s *all pre-Christian revelation was veiled* and Abelard’s *understanding is compulsory for genuine faith*. Lombard maintained the Augustinian view of recognising faith in the Incarnation as essential for salvation among the ancients, but distinguished the abundance of knowledge necessary between the “learned” and that required by the “masses”, based on Cornelius (Acts10).

Alain of Lille’s *De Fide Catholica: Contra Haereticos, Valdenses, Ludaeos et Paganos* and *Ars Catholicae Fidei*¹⁸ (c.1175) were written in a period of military activism and rampant heresy¹⁹. The Albigensians allegedly denied the *Descendit* and that the souls of the saints who died before the Resurrection were eternally condemned²⁰. Alain specifically addressed the them using the NT only (since they denied the OT) except for once using the *Credo* in *Catholic Faith Against the Heretics*. The argument was John the Baptist was not condemned to hell (Jhn.1:29-30, Luk.7:24-28), Christ descended into hell (Luk.11:21-22; Eph.4:8-9) and emphasised Christ had no reason to descend unless it was to free the elect

¹⁷ Bernard’s *Epistola CLXXXVIII*, quoted in Turner (1966). *Descendit Ad Inferos*. 183.

¹⁸ Douglas (Ed.) (1996). *Who’s Who in Christian History*. 10.

¹⁹ Hageman, G. E. (1950). *Sketches From The History Of The Church*. Concordia Publishing House. 104.

²⁰ Turner (1966). *Descendit Ad Inferos*. 185.

whom Satan enslaved²¹. Alain held a similar conviction as Bernard, that the saints were not in the deepest region of hell, were not punished materially, but were removed from God's countenance.

When he addressed the Jews, in the third book, his hope was evangelism more than apologetics. He discussed all saints perished prior to the Messiah's *Descendit*. His Scripture proofs came from the OT, including *I shall descend to hell mourning my son* (Gen.37:35) and *Hell is my home, and I have spread my couch in darkness* (Job.17:13), and emphasising it was necessary for original sin only. After demonstrating the just were in hell, Jesus went to deliver them to the Father using traditionally-interpreted passages and the *Credo*.

Thomas Aquinas' *Questiones disputatae de Veritate* (1259) and *Summa Theologica* (1274) provide the definitive theological collation of *Descendit* up to that time. In *Theologica*, he addresses the propriety and necessity for Christ to perform this work, based on Scripture and notably Hosea²². Prior to this, Aquinas included aspects of contentious issues pertaining to *Descendit* in his *Questions on Truth*. He dealt with the saved John the Baptist doubting Christ's descent²³.

A detailed translation and exegesis of many of these Scripture *proofs* are discussed in the companion work²⁴.

Modern Theological Perspectives of He Descended into Hell

There are many perspectives of this term, *He Descended into Hell*. The common and traditional doctrines will be examined separately.

Roman Catholic

Romanist doctrine summarises their belief that Jesus' "human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him." (CCC 637²⁵) Their eschatology mentions the *abode of the dead* (הַיָּוֵשׁ *Sheol*; ᾍδης *Hades*), where the righteous and unjust are deprived by God's blessed presence. This was formerly known as *Limbus Patrum* (Limbo). They claim that the experience for either condition is not the same (cf. *Rich man and Lazarus*, Luk. 16:22-26). They postulate Jesus did not descend into hell for the damned, but to deliver the righteous preceding Him (CCC 634). Jesus preached the gospel to the dead (CCC 634) and those who heard Him will live (CCC 635)²⁶.

²¹ Turner (1966). *Descendit Ad Inferos*. 186.

²² *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE: Christ's descent into hell* (Tertia Pars, Q. 52). (n.d.). www.newadvent.org. Retrieved October 9, 2020, from <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4052.htm>

²³ Aquinas, T.; Mulligan, R.W (Trans.) (1952). *The 29 Questions of Truth*. (Art.XI:6) [https://documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274._Thomas_Aquinas._The_29_questions_on_Truth_\(Mulligan_Translation\).EN.pdf](https://documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274._Thomas_Aquinas._The_29_questions_on_Truth_(Mulligan_Translation).EN.pdf). 466.

²⁴ Duffy, J.G. (2020) *Reformed Scriptural Analyses of He Descended into Hell*. 2-8.

²⁵ This essay will maintain convention (CCC X) referring to the specific number (X) of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

²⁶ Roman Catholic Church. (1995). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Complete and Updated). Doubleday. 180-181.

Selwyn claims the standard tradition of second-century teaching on the subject was that “Christ liberated the souls of the patriarchs and prophets of Israel”²⁷. This was not taught by Hermas or Ignatius, but was taught clearly by Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian²⁸. Aquinas held to this view of Limbo and associated features²⁹.

Anglican

The Anglican *39 Articles of Religion* consist of *Article III - Of the going down of Christ into Hell* which states “As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.”³⁰ In Cramner’s *42 Articles*, it is expanded:

“The body laid in the sepulcher until the resurrection, but *his Ghost departing from him was with the Ghosts that were in prison, or in Hell, and did preach to the same, as the place of St. Peter does testify.*” [author’s emphasis]³¹.

Lutheran

Lutheran theology tends to follow the Roman view, based on Aquinas’ work. Further with Luther’s consideration was that Christ actually descended beyond Limbo, to enter the very region of the damned. He proposed that this would demonstrate the ultimate triumph over Satan and the demons, to announce their condemnation and glorify God’s justice and holiness³².

Reformed

Reformed theologians have historically had a range of perspectives regarding the phrase, but all essentially deny that Christ went into hell (either as limbo or torment). Calvin (and Danaeus, Ursinius, Olevian, Polanus, and Marckius³³) tended to view the *Descendit* as **metaphorical hell throes on the cross**³⁴. Others refer to the *Descendit* as a descent into the literal and **physical grave**, although this seems to be a repetition of the former article *Dead and Buried*. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643) (and Sohnus, Perkins and Ames)³⁵ have the view that *Descendit* refers to the state and **lordship over death** under which Christ was through the three days of burial³⁶. Ryle, Hodge and Dabney held *Descendit* meant descent into the place of departed spirits, where His soul continued a **separate conscious existence** until his

²⁷ Selwyn, E. G. (1981). *The First epistle of St. Peter: the Greek text with introduction, notes and essays*. Baker Book House.

²⁸ Greenbury, J. (2001, September 28). *The descent into hell by Christ* [Email to John Duffy]. http://johnduffy.net.au/academic%20notes/Descent%20into%20hell%20by%20Christ_Greenbury_2001.pdf. 1.

²⁹ Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (2009). *Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologica*. III:52:5; III:69.4-7. <https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/cache/summa.pdf>.

³⁰ Anglican Church League. (2019). *The Thirty Nine Articles*. Anglican Church League, Sydney, Australia. <http://acl.asn.au/the-thirty-nine-articles/>

³¹ *42 Articles of Religion* (Cramner, 1553). (2016). Anglican.net. <https://forums.anglican.net/attachments/42-articles-of-religion-pdf.771/>

³² Greenbury, J. (2001). *The descent into hell by Christ*. 1.

³³ Greenbury, J. (2001). *The descent into hell by Christ*. 1-2.

Beeke, J. R., & Jones, M. (2012). *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. Reformation Heritage Books. 144-156.

³⁴ Calvin, J., & White, R. (2014). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Banner Of Truth Trust. 249-252.

³⁵ Greenbury, J. (2001). *The descent into hell by Christ*. 2.

Beeke, J. R., & Jones, M. (2012). *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. 237,239-245.

³⁶ Ward, R. S. (2000). *The Westminster confession and catechisms in modern English: a modernised text commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-49*. New Melbourne Press. WCF7.4. 25; WLC50. 76.

resurrection³⁷. A more comprehensive presentation of the modern Reformed view of *Descendit* is included in the companion essay, as well as examining notable Scriptural arguments (pro and con)³⁸.

Conclusion

“The phrase from the *Apostle’s Creed* has an article, *He descended into hell*, with a chequered history predominantly derived from a non-canonical, apocryphal document (the *Gospel of Nicodemus*) and buttressed from genuinely superior theologians. Throughout time it has evolved from theological curiosity to heresy and (in the modern Reformed faith) apologetic re-interpretation in line with *Sola Scriptura*. This essay has glanced at the complex sources of the main non-canonical document, evolution and modern theological perspectives of the *Descendit* doctrine” (Duffy, 2020)³⁹. The author is enamoured with the idea of writing a thesis or booklet about this remarkable article of faith - *He descended into hell*.

Soli Deo Gloria

³⁷ Hodge, A. A. (1978). *The Confession of Faith*. Banner of Truth Trust. (Original work published 1869). 146-147.

³⁸ Duffy, J.G. (2020) *Reformed Scriptural Analyses of He Descended into Hell*. 9.

³⁹ Duffy, J.G. (2020) *Reformed Scriptural Analyses of He Descended into Hell*. 9.

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