Wilhelm Loehe: Preaching and the Lord's Prayer

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Wilhelm Loehe, the German Lutheran pastor of the nineteenth century, is remembered most prominently for his contributions to mission, diaconal work, and liturgical renewal. His great emphasis on ecclesiology binds these three together, whether that be the church gathered in worship or the church being sent out into the world in proclamation and works of mercy. Although Loehe never left Germany, his influence has been global through his missionary endeavors, primarily the training and sending of pastors. Amid all this, however, less attention has been given to Loehe the preacher, and the place of preaching within his wider theological and churchly program.[1] This lack of attention is striking given that Loehe was widely held to be a great preacher in his time, once compared to his more famous contemporary Charles Spurgeon,[2] and even described in somewhat hagiographic terms as Chrysostom of his century.[3]

This article contributes to the scholarship surrounding Loehe's preaching by investigating one aspect of his homiletic work, namely his catechetical sermons on the Lord's Prayer from 1835. More specifically, the focus provides a rhetorical and theological analysis of Loehe's opening sermon in that series on the introduction and address of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven." The analysis takes place within the Christian preaching tradition broadly, but more particularly in relation to Lutheran catechetical preaching. I will argue that Loehe can be seen as faithfully embodying and enacting this heritage, while also incorporating particular accents consistent with his personal piety and wider ecclesiological vision.

1. The classic work is Hans Kressel, *Wilhelm Löhe Als Prediger* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1929). Other articles and sections of books which deal with Löhe's preaching include: Dietrich Blaufuss, "Löhe Preaches the Psalms," *Logia* 17, no. 3 (2008): 7–11; Jacob Corzine, "Wilhelm Loehe's 1866 Sermons on the Lord's Supper," *Lutheran Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2022): 151–165; Theodor Schober, *Wilhelm Löhe: Ein zeuge lebendiger lutherischer Kirche*, trans. Sister Bertha Mueller (Giessen, Germany: Brunnen-Verlag, 1959), 84–88.

2. Quoted in Kressel, *Prediger*, 93.

3. Wilhelm Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 14.

By investigating [Loehe's] catechetical sermons on the Lord's Prayer from 1835, the focus provides a rhetorical and theological analysis of Loehe's opening sermon … on the introduction and address of the Lord's Prayer.

Who Was Wilhelm Loehe?

We begin with a brief biographical account of Loehe's life, especially as it pertains to his development as a preacher. Loehe was born in Franconia on February 21, 1808, as one of seven children. His father died when Wilhelm was only eight years old, an event which had a lasting impact. Loehe's upbringing, education, and spiritual formation were left to his mother whose faith was influenced by Lutheran pietism.[4] She also continued to hold her pastor and church in high esteem, and encouraged and made it possible for Loehe to study toward the ministry.

After completing the initial stage of his education, Loehe began theological study at Erlangen in preparation for the pastoral ministry. There he was influenced by a number of professors connected to revival movements and pietism. His theological studies also took him to Berlin, where he encountered famous thinkers such as Hegel, yet was not drawn to the philosophical side of theological study. Loehe's biographers note the significant influence of the famous preachers he was able to listen to in churches around Berlin. Loehe was especially impacted by the preaching of Frederick Schleiermacher and Gerhard Friedrich Strauss, both

4. Erika Geiger, *The Life, Work and Influence of Wilhelm Loehe*, trans. Wolf Dietrich Knappe (St Louis: Concordia, 2010), 9.

of whom had a reputation as fine preachers.[5]

Loehe successfully completed his theological studies and was ordained as a pastor in 1831. He then spent several years in various pastoral appointments under the supervision of senior pastors. He soon gained a reputation for his preaching, both positively and negatively. On the positive side, people were drawn to Loehe's passionate preaching in large numbers; reports exist of his holding a congregations' attention for hours on end.[6] On the negative side, some of the church authorities were concerned about the intensity of his preaching, especially his willingness to confront particular sins from the pulpit and thereby create public unrest.[7] This reputation was arguably a major factor in his inability to gain a long-term pastoral call in a significant city location.

In 1837, Loehe was called to the small village of Neuendettelsau, where he began a pastoral ministry which spanned the rest of his life. Although in his early years, he served there somewhat reluctantly and attempted to gain calls elsewhere, eventually he accepted this as a long-term call from God and stayed for over thirty-five years. Shortly before beginning, he married Helena Andrae and they were blessed with four children. Tragically, Helena died after only six years of marriage, and their young son died one year later. The death of Loehe's wife had such a devastating impact that some have argued the eschatological emphasis in Loehe's ecclesiology can be explained in part by the grief over his wife.[8]

At Neuendettelsau, as in his earlier years, Loehe gained a reputation as an outstanding preacher. Reports abound of visitors travelling to hear his sermons from neighboring villages. Kressel describes "sermon hikes," where people would set off on Saturday afternoon, collect people from villages along the way, arrive in Neuendettelsau, and stay with local farmers overnight, all just to hear Loehe preach on Sunday morning.[9] After worship they attended further Christian instruction with Loehe and sometimes spent time with him at his home before beginning the walk home. There are records of many others travelling to hear Loehe as well, such as fellow pastors, teachers from the theological faculty of Erlangen, and even nobility and professors of philosophy and mathematics from other universities. One description of Loehe's preaching gives further color to the portrait painted here:

> Both friend and enemy had to agree that the great village pastor belonged to the foremost pastors of his time. His appearance, his natural noble conduct, and above all his glorious voice full of manly force and overpowering kindness, capable of being modulated to fit all manner of feelings, of a musical pleasing sound —quite exceptional. Professors and peasants, strangers and deaconesses, children and old people, all were held as if by magnetic force, so that the tension increased to the end. Here was the Spirit of God with its gifts, the external and the internal.[10]

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Here we are granted a glimpse of what cannot be captured in his written sermons through a firsthand account of elements, such as his voice and general presence in the pulpit, both very significant aspects of his reputation as a preacher.

Loehe made another contribution to the history of preaching by training and sending pastors internationally. Loehe's long-standing interest in missions was aroused by calls from the United States, where pastors especially were needed for the many German migrants. Loehe also understood this as a means toward reaching the Native American population. Loehe organized fundraising, training, and logistics for pastors to be sent. This work led to his being recognized as founding father of two different synods in the U.S., as well as a significant influence as far as South America and Oceania.[11] One Australian Lutheran theologian paid tribute to the Loehe influence in his country, mentioning "thorough sermon preparation"[12] as a part of this legacy.

Matrix for Analysis

It is helpful at the outset to note the paradigms and perspectives which guide this analysis of Loehe's preaching. In terms of rhetoric, attention is given to features of Loehe's sermons which are indicative of his wider approach and are of significance for the history of preaching. These elements include his overall structure, the use of imagery, repetition, and rhetorical questions. While some of these are standard rhetorical categories, others are noteworthy

5. Geiger, *Loehe*, 33.
6. Loehe, *Three Books*, 4.
7. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, vol 6, The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 121.
8. Loehe, *Three Books,* 37.
9. Kressel, *Prediger*, 69.
10. Schober, *Witness*, 85.
11. Loehe, *Three Books,* 1.
12. Max Loehe, "Wilhelm Loehe: Neuendettelsau Influence in the Lutheran Church of Australia," *Springfielder* 35, no. 3 (December 1971): 189.

specifically as characteristics of Loehe's preaching. One of these is its image-rich quality. Thereby we read of his "flourishing imagination,"[13] which attracted many to hear his preaching or references to his sermons as "masterpieces of poetic imagination."[14] In analyzing the sermon's progression, we will reflect on the significance of these features.

I will utilize several perspectives which will interact, forming a matrix for analysis. The first locates Loehe's preaching within the tradition of catechetical sermons that have a long pedigree in church history. By definition, catechetical preaching does not focus on expositing a biblical text, but rather a teaching or practice of the Christian faith in a thematic way. Most commonly, these have focused on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, although other categories, such as virtues and vices, also have been prominent. These sermons were preached throughout church history but became prominent in the Middle Ages. One scholar argues catechetical sermons incorporated the function of the catechumenate from the earlier periods of the church.[15] It is worth noting that catechetical sermons have often contained a strong emphasis on moral exhortation.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther's catechisms became a crucial dimension of his reform efforts. Catechetical preaching was also utilized by the Lutheran Reformers. This has been documented and analyzed by Mary Jane Haemig.[16] Haemig's findings provide part of the analytical template for Loehe's preaching. Haemig notes three common misconceptions about catechetical preaching:

> One misconception is that preaching the catechism is meant primarily to teach and convey information. Another misconception sees the primary reason for preaching the catechism as to improve the moral level of the listeners. Still another misconception is that the catechism replaces or competes with scripture.[17]

Haemig demonstrates that these misconceptions do not accurately describe the practice of catechetical preaching at the time of the Reformation. I will demonstrate that neither do they apply to Loehe's catechetical preaching.

Another perspective involves Loehe's theological outlook that was able to hold various competing Lutheran impulses in tension. Corzine references this in his analysis of Loehe's Lord's Supper sermons, stating: "Another noteworthy aspect of his legacy is the inherent tension between depictions of Loehe as an heir of Pietism, on the one hand, and the already mentioned primacy of emphasis on the sacraments, on the other."[18] Nessan explores this point throughout his work on Loehe and broadens it further, noting how the Loehe legacy incorporates emphases often thought to be at odds with one another, such as confessional orthodoxy, pietism, liturgical worship, diaconal service, evangelical proclamation, and missionary endeavor.[19] Taking into account the polarity between confessional orthodoxy and pietistic devotion, another theme for our analysis explores how this manifests itself in Loehe's preaching.

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The final perspective by which Loehe's preaching will be evaluated is doxological, or "preaching as worship." Several scholars have noted this distinctive feature of Loehe's preaching. Old describes Loehe's sermons as "a doxological symphony. They take the theme of the text and weave around it harmonies from the whole of Scripture."[20] One particular Christmas Day sermon "becomes not only an exhortation to praise God but a hymn of praise itself."[21] Similarly, Blaufuss notes on Loehe's preaching of the Psalms how his treatment moves from proclamation to prayer: "Loehe's sermon does not merely preach about the text, but lets the text speak for itself, manifest its shape, and reach its goal. This allows the hearer to be brought into active movement toward God in prayer."[22] This is an intriguing dimension worth analyzing in relation to Loehe's Lord's Prayer sermons as well.

These perspectives provide elements of the matrix for my rhetorical and theological analysis. The analysis begins with the

13. Schober and Mueller, *Wilhelm Loehe*, 88.
14. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 123.
15. Green, Eugene A., "Aelfric the Catechist," in *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages,* eds, Thomas L. Amos, Eugene A. Green, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), 64.
16. Mary Jane Haemig, "The Living Voice of the Catechism: German Lutheran Catechetical Preaching 1530–1580" (ThD thesis, Harvard, 1996).
17. Mary Jane Haemig, "Preaching the Catechism: A Transformational Enterprise," *Dialog* 36, no. 2 (1997): 101.
18. Jacob Corzine, "Wilhelm Loehe's 1866 Sermons on the Lord's Supper," 152.
19. Craig L. Nessan, *Wilhelm Loehe and North America: Historical Perspective and Living Legacy* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2020), xv, 118–145.
20. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 123.
21. Old, *Reading and Preaching*, 123.
22. Blaufuss, "Löhe Preaches the Psalms," 9.

preface and an overview of the collection of sermons, before looking at the opening sermon's progression from introduction to conclusion, as we weave throughout our analysis utilizing the matrix.

Loehe's Sermons on the Lord's Prayer

Preface and Overall Collection

Loehe's sermons on the Lord's Prayer are from 1835 in Nürnberg, which is quite early in his preaching career. There are nine sermons in the series, one for each of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer together with an introductory sermon on the address, "Our Father who art in heaven," and a concluding sermon on the word "Amen." It is difficult to ascertain the time and setting for these sermons. We know that Loehe preached at Sunday morning services, Sunday afternoon services, and during the week.[23] One imagines these catechetical sermons would be more suited to either the Sunday afternoon or weekday settings. However, in the preface Loehe makes mention of the fact that the reader will notice that some of the sermons were for Holy Communion days and one for a Holy Communion service at which only young people were attending Communion.[24] As such, the exact setting is difficult to say for sure.

One observation about Loehe's preface is worth noting for its significance in the history of preaching. Loehe describes the process by which the sermon collection came into being. He says that the sermons reflect the oral proclamation which happened on each occasion, but they have also been edited by him for use by a wider audience in a sermon collection. This is consistent with the tradition of sermon collections and postils throughout church history. It is noteworthy that there are actually three prefaces for three separate published editions of these sermons, demonstrating their popularity and influence. One author notes how this particular sermon collection came to Australia from the 1860s onward.[25]

It is of interest that Loehe reflects on this process and the difference between written sermons and the actual event of preaching. He speaks of the preached word as the "living Word," which cannot be truly depicted in writing, and compares the preached sermon over against the written one as a "fragrant rose in the valley" compared with one that has been painted in a picture.[26] Loehe values highly the actual event of preaching God's word to his people; the collected written sermon form, as useful as it may be, is always one step removed from the actual event.

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Analysis of Sermon on "Our Father who art in heaven"

We move next to our detailed analysis of the opening sermon on the address of the Lord's Prayer. Broadly speaking, the sermon falls into a three-part structure together with an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction Loehe focuses first on the fact that it is God's will that we pray and, secondly, on the reality that the Lord's Prayer is short and simple. Therefore, it is memorable, but also deep and profound so that no one can exhaust its depths. Loehe uses several rhetorical features to engage his hearer, such as the image of prayer as a heavenly chariot leading up to God and the image of the Lord's Prayer as a deep body of water.

Regarding images for water, Loehe utilizes the imagery of the sea in several ways. First, it is an image for the depth and profundity of the Lord's Prayer. Loehe emphasizes how we should not be fooled by the brevity or simplicity of the prayer into thinking it is shallow. Rather, no person has ever "prayed it out" and no preacher has exhausted its meaning.[27] Loehe uses the image in a creative way by subverting the metaphor in pointing out that this "sea" is actually full of "sweet, living water" which can satisfy. This leads him to employ the sea imagery as an invitation to hear this sermon, and in fact the whole series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer, as he says, "Gather to the shore of this fullness of grace!"[28] Finally Loehe highlights one more aspect of this rich image and gives us insight into his concept of the preaching task. He says that he will draw the water for them and give it out, so that together they can be filled by the Lord and rejoice.[29] Loehe imagines his task as preacher to go to the "waters" of God's word on behalf of the people, in order that they together can experience the blessings of God.

The first main section of the sermon deals with why we can

23. Nessan, *Wilhelm Loehe*, 13.

24. Wilhelm Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Klaus Ganzert and Curt Schadewitz (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1951-1986), 6.1, 283.

25. Dean Zweck, "The Influence of Wilhelm Löhe/Neuendettelsau on the Lutheran Church of Australia," in *Wilhelm Löhe: Erbe und Vision*, ed. Dietrich Blaufuss (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009) 311.

26. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 281.

27. "Kein Prediger es ausgeredet oder nach dem vollen Sinn erklärt." Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 287.

28. "Sammelt euch her ans Ufer dieser Gnadenfülle." Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 287.

29. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 287.

pray to God as Father. Here Loehe says there is a difference in how we name God as Father in the Lord's Prayer as compared to the Creed. In the Creed, we are calling God Father primarily because of his relationship to Jesus Christ as his Son, whereas in the Lord's Prayer we name God as Father primarily because we are his children in Christ. Here we encounter the first example of how Loehe embodies the Lutheran tradition of catechetical preaching as he takes the opportunity early in the sermon to speak a clear word of law and Gospel to his hearers.

Somewhat surprisingly, Loehe moves from mentioning God as our Father because we are his children in Christ, to issuing a warning to unrepentant sinners presuming to call on God as Father. In a series of rhetorical questions, Loehe asks whether the person who rejoices in sins—or who has no remorse or longing for forgiveness, or who does not long and pray for deliverance from sin, or has becomes a blasphemer, or various other situations—whether they will dare to stand before the holy God and call on him as Father? Loehe insists the answer is an emphatic "No!" as God will not be mocked.[30] Even from the written sermon, one gets a sense of the intensity and specificity of Loehe's preaching of the law, as well as a glimpse into the ways he brought offense to church authorities of a more rationalist mindset.

However, this word of law is not an end in itself but prepares the way for Loehe to proclaim the universal and gracious invitation of God to all people in Christ, enabling everyone to call on God as Father. Speaking of the need for permission to call on God as Father through the Spirit, Loehe preaches: "All people shall receive this permission. All shall come to call upon the great God in heaven as Father! For all shall become His children in Christ Jesus. All shall receive the Spirit of His Son, and cry out in the same: Abba, Dear Father!"[31] Loehe then poses a series of rhetorical questions about how Christ died for all to make them God's children in relation to the rhetorical questions about the law a paragraph earlier. Far from being merely didactic or moralistic, Loehe uses catechetical preaching to warn the unrepentant, and to proclaim Christ and the Gospel to his hearers.

Surprisingly, Loehe does not simply move on to more instruction on the Lord's Prayer, but repeats this law-Gospel homiletic with even more intensity. This time he has in mind not faithful Christians who need to be reminded of their sin, but unbelievers or those who have fallen away from the faith. He speaks to those who cannot rightly be called God's children but want to become so.[32] He uses this to issue a personal invitation to his hearers that they take this opportunity to repent and pray in faith to the Father. He pleads with his hearers to accept God's gift of adoption as children and points them to God's Son who paid the price on the cross "to purchase you as children."[33] Loehe includes emotive language, encouraging his hearers to "weep that they have stayed away so long,"[34] an example of what could be called a pietistic flavor to Loehe's preaching of law and Gospel. Loehe concludes the section by assuring his hearers that the Son will rejoice to bring all lost children back home to his Father.

Not only do we never pray alone, but that we should not pray only for ourselves but for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. The plural, collective address of this prayer prompts us to remember the needs of those in the church whether spiritual or bodily.

In the second section, Loehe dwells on the significance of praying *Our* Father rather than *My* Father and makes two subpoints. The first serves as encouragement to us to know that the whole church on earth and heaven prays with us, with Christ himself leading us all in prayer as our Head. Loehe stresses that even when we are alone in our closet, we are never truly alone in Christian prayer. Here he uses a memorable image from the Old Testament in Moses, Aaron, and Hur. Loehe says that the support and encouragement we receive from knowing that we never pray alone is like Aaron and Hur supporting Moses' hands as he holds them up. The second point is that not only do we never pray alone, but that we should not pray only for ourselves but for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. The plural, collective address of this prayer prompts us to remember the needs of those in the church whether spiritual or bodily.

Loehe is drawn to the ecclesial dimension of prayer already in his early years, which is consistent with the later development of his theology. Loehe's famous work, *Three Books on the Church*, was published in 1845, ten years after these sermons, and is understood as indicative of his gradual shift toward a more confessional and liturgical Lutheranism. The pietistic movements, on the other hand, tended to emphasize the individual soul before God.[35] Yet here we see that already in his early years Loehe's ecclesiological emphasis flowers, simply from meditation on the single word "Our." It is noteworthy that this occurs shortly after the section focusing on the repentance, faith, and conversion of the individual soul. We find here an example of what Nessan describes of Loehe holding together impulses within Lutheranism which are sometimes played

30. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 288.

31. "Alle Menschen sollen diese Erlaubnis empfangen, alle dahin kommen, den großen Gott im Himmel als Vater anzurufen! Denn alle sollen sie in Christo Jesu Seine Kinder werden, alle den Geist Seines Sohnes empfangen und in semselben schreien: Abba, Lieber Vater!" Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 289.

32. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 290.

33. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 290.

34. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 290.

35. This characterization should not be stressed too much though as communal gatherings outside official church structures were a very important part of pietistic movements.

off against one another.

There is one further example of the doxological character of Loehe's preaching or preaching as worship. Preaching is about proclaiming God's word to God's people, and happens most often within a worship service. The basic conception of preaching in relation to worship is that in the sermon God's word is spoken and, subsequently, the people respond in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. The characterization of Loehe's preaching as doxological, however, points to a more complex relationship, as within the sermon itself the people of God are drawn into the act of worship. This occurs in several ways in this sermon. Loehe not only speaks about praying to God but actually prays over and over again. For example, at one point when discussing the needs of fellow Christians for whom we should pray, Loehe models the sort of prayer the Father admonishes us toward, implicitly inviting his hearers to join their hearts to his words as he says:

> We have only one and the same common refuge and help: that is You alone! Hear our words, work on our speech, hear our cry, our King and our God: help us and save us! A father is the comfort and protection of his children! You, then, are our comfort and protection, for you are called "Our Father."[36]

Although Loehe is preaching to the people gathered, he is addressing God at the same time. Thus, his sermon functions in a doxological manner and this is truly a striking dimension of his preaching.

The third main section of the sermon considers the phrase "who art in heaven." Loehe provides a nice transitional paragraph where he asks a question that he then answers. The question is why our Lord would teach us to pray to the Father "in heaven" when we know he is omnipresent and always with us here on earth. To this question Loehe answers in a fourfold way. First, this phrase teaches us not to cling to earthly fathers, or earthly things in general. Second, the presence of the Father in heaven is to be distinguished from his presence on earth. In heaven the Father's presence is "immeasurable and unspeakable glory,"[37] whereas on earth he is not revealed in his full glory. Third, to pray to the Father "who is in heaven" is to awaken in us the desire for our heavenly home. Finally, this phrase is an implicit promise of our own future ascension to heaven, where our Lord prepares a place for us.

This second point returns us to Haemig's third misconception about catechetical sermons, namely that they replace or compete with Scripture. Loehe makes it clear how he understands himself as an heir of Luther as he sets out to preach on the catechism. He writes in his preface that no one has spoken more excellently and beautifully than Luther on the Lord's Prayer,[38] and after his preface includes Luther's meditative prayer from 1518 based on the Our Father titled "God and the Soul."[39] What is striking about Loehe's sermons is that they are far from a recapitulation of Luther's catechetical material. In fact, Loehe refers to Luther's explanations of the Lord's Prayer only a handful of times throughout the sermons, while expounding many themes and accents that are not emphasized in Luther's catechisms. The significance of praying to the Father "who art in heaven" and the nature of heavenly glory is a motif that does not appear in Luther's small or large catechisms (as far as I am aware) and is a good example of how Loehe prioritizes the Lord's words in Scripture, even as he self-consciously stands in the tradition of Luther.

Loehe here gives the image of a lark flying up into the air, fleeing from the world below. This is an image of the praying soul seeking Christ at the Father's right hand. …The hearers' imaginations are vividly engaged as Loehe leads them to meditate on the flight of a bird as a representation for the mystery of prayer.

In the third main section of the sermon, there is another example of Loehe's use of imagery, where the believing soul at prayer is depicted as a bird. As Loehe answers the question of why the Lord added the words "who art in heaven" to the address "Our Father," Loehe emphasizes that this phrase detaches us from earthly fathers—and from earthly attachments more generally—and draws us to heaven, specifically to the heavenly Father. Loehe here gives the image of a lark flying up into the air, fleeing from the world below. This is an image of the praying soul seeking Christ at the Father's right hand.[40] Later in his sermon Loehe reintroduces this imagery, when he speaks of the phrase "who art in heaven" reminding us of the great promise of our future heavenly home. He depicts the realization of this promise and our own ascension to the Father as "growing wings to return home."[41] Here the hearers' imaginations are vividly engaged as Loehe leads them to meditate on the flight of a bird as a representation for the mystery of prayer.

36. "Nur Eine und dieselbe gemeinsame Zuflucht und Hülfe haben wir: das bist Du alleine! Höre unsre Worte, werke auf unsre Rede, vernimm unser Schreien, unser König und unser Gott: hilf uns und errette uns! Ein Vater ist ja seiner Kinder Trost und Schutz! Sen du also unser Trost und Schutz: denn du bist und heißest: „Unser Vater!" Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 292.

37. "…unermesslicher, unnennbarer Herrlichkeit", Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 293.

38. "Uber Gebet und Vater Unser hat wohl niemand so vortrefflich geschrieben als Luther, von dessen Schriften über diesen Gegenstand eine immer schöner ist, also die andre.„ Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 281.

39. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 285–286.

40. Loehe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 293.

41. "…wo uns die Flügel zur Heimkehr gewachsen sein werden!" Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, 294.

This sort of imagery has a long and rich history within Christian preaching, going back at least as far as the *Fifty Spiritual Homilies* of Macarius of Egypt, to which Loehe refers in the section on homiletics in his book, *The Pastor*.[42] This raises the intriguing question about Macarius as one of Loehe's homiletical influences. In Macarius, the imagery is connected to Psalm 55:6, where the psalmist prays for wings to escape danger, and is used in his homilies to link to the work of the Holy Spirit, as participating in the divine nature and even the crucifixion of Christ.[43] Here we find evidence of Loehe as a preacher drawing from very ancient sources in the homiletical tradition and making them his own.

Loehe concludes his sermon with a crescendo of promises, Bible verses, and appeals that revolve around the certainty of the believer's future hope, the need to patiently bear the cross, and the call to be prepared and watch for the Lord Jesus to come again. Far from a carelessly thrown together miscellany, these elements are beautifully woven together as in a tapestry. At the end of Loehe's sermon, the hearer is not left with a simple exhortation to pray the Lord's Prayer more often or more devoutly. Rather, Loehe seeks to leave his hearers with a note of encouragement and comfort, and in a doxological manner, to lift their hearts to their Father in heaven.

Summarizing the key elements of our analysis, Loehe's sermon has a clear, easy-to-follow structure that closely follows the words of the text, "Our Father who art in heaven." He utilizes imagery arising from the Scriptures and Christian tradition in creative ways. There is an effective use of rhetorical questions throughout, and not only for didactic purposes but to preach law and Gospel. Loehe faithfully embodies the tradition of Lutheran catechetical preaching, where he does more than merely convey information, indulge in moralism, or replace the Scriptures with catechetical explanations. Instead, his preaching is thoroughly rooted in the words of the Bible, full of Gospel proclamation, and eager to relate to the lives of the hearers.

Loehe's reputation as one who holds both to a confessional orthodoxy and a certain pietistic devotion is borne out, for example, as he emphasizes the reality of the church at prayer through time and space, calling the individual soul to repentance and faith with intensity and fervor. Finally, Loehe demonstrates preaching as worship in drawing his hearers up into prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, even as he speaks of these very things.

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Conclusion

Wilhelm Loehe's contributions to the life of the church in mission, diakonia, and liturgy are rightly celebrated and studied. In particular, his preaching is a significant part of his legacy that needs further attention. There are few preachers who have spent their entire ministry in a village as small as Neuendettelsau, about whom it can be said they are truly significant in the history of Christian preaching. Yet for Loehe this is true. Just as Nessan referenced the differing ecclesial commitments held together by Loehe, he further argues that these themes in Loehe are a rich resource that can "contribute dynamically to the vitality of the future church."[44] I believe the same could be said of Loehe's preaching. The insights gained from this historical study provide fodder for ongoing reflection on the nature and art of the preaching task in our time.

42. Wilhelm Loehe, *The Pastor*, trans. Wolf Dietrich Knappe and Charles P. Schaum (St Louis: Concordia, 2015), 217.

43. George A. Maloney, tr. and ed., *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 45, 74, 192, 225, 233.

44. Nessan, *Wilhelm Loehe,* 118.