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# Loeche, Liturgies, and Lives Mattering

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## Introduction

In his book *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments* Joseph Martos, suggests that symbols can lose their truthfulness over time. He points to the plaque at the base of the Statue of Liberty in Upper New York Bay. In 1883 Emma Lazarus penned these words about the statue she called the Mother of Exiles:

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ...

Martos declares that in the late 1800s, these were honest words reflecting commitments of the United States, “which took in millions of immigrants fleeing hunger and political persecution.” Martos deems these famous words no longer an honest reflection of general political sentiment in this country, saying, “It is no longer true to say that America welcomes the tired, the poor, the masses of people yearning to breathe the air of freedom ... It is no longer an honest symbol.”<sup>1</sup> For Martos, a symbol or ritual becomes dishonest when misaligned in its present enactment with the reality to which it refers.

It is possible for a given symbol or ritual to be both honest and dishonest at the same time. By way of example, Martos turns to Christians, who during settler colonialism<sup>2</sup>

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1. Joseph Martos, *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments: Letting Go of Doctrines and Celebrating What's Real* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2018), 91.

2. Cláudio Carvalhaes offers this description of colonialism: “Colonialism is a combination of racism and profit—as a way to uproot us from the land and detach us from the earth. So when you talk about colonialism in this country, you are talking about the genocide of Indigenous and Black people—and that continues ... You uproot people from the land—the place of their birth and their death ... that’s what colonialism does ... You take away the culture, which is the way of relating with the earth—with the land—where you live, and destroy the possibility of doing the funerals—which is the ways in which you do your religion.” Cláudio Carvalhaes, “Re-Imagining Rituals of Worship: A Virtual Conversation with Rev. Mia McClain” (video), YouTube, August 18, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQeFnLhm79Y>.

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Although difficult, the exacting words from Martos belong in the vocabulary of those who care for Loeche’s legacy because there is evidence Loeche and his followers thought they were bringing true religion and religious correctness to others, operating with moral and religious superiority, and spoke of American Indians as benighted savages.

in the United States, brought with them sacred symbols such as crosses. “To European Christians, these were symbols of moral superiority and religious correctness: the Europeans were bringing the true religion and its moral values to benighted savages. To the [N]ative Americans, however, these were symbols of conquest and oppression.”<sup>3</sup>

The phrases—“symbols of moral superiority and religious correctness,” and “bringing true religion and its moral values to benighted savages”—are harsh; it would feel better if these words of cultural superiority did not apply to Wilhelm Loeche’s missionary efforts to American Indians. Loeche, after all, honestly believed that it was the church’s work “to carry the torch of the pure truth to all people, as far as it is possible

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Settler colonialism is a particular “type of colonization in which the indigenous peoples of a colonized region are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there;” [https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/settler\\_colonialism](https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/settler_colonialism). Many scholars agree that settler colonialism is inherently genocidal.

3. Martos, *Honest Rituals*, 92.

to do so;” furthermore, he really thought it possible to missionize the Ojibwe and in no way “assist in subjugation.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet history illumines that it is accurate that Lutherans at the Bethany mission and in Frankenmuth, Michigan, as well as the other German colonies did displace Ojibwe. Ojibwe anthropologist David Treuer, in his 450-page history of Native America, writes that by 1890 “Indians had lost control of 100 percent of the United States and remained only in small clusters scattered like freckles over the face of the country ... The entire United States had been ‘settled,’ and Indians had been broken, removed, and safely ‘settled.’”<sup>5</sup>

Although difficult, the exacting words from Martos belong in the vocabulary of those who care for Loehe’s legacy because there is evidence Loehe and his followers thought they were bringing true religion and religious correctness to others, operating with moral and religious superiority, and spoke of American Indians as benighted savages. We consider these serially.

### *True religion and religious correctness*

Loehe did seem to have wanted to bring what Martos calls “true religion” to people. He writes in a persuasive tone when he extols people living near Native Americans to convert them to Christianity: “And just this synod, these congregations live in the thought of serving the heathens, who still hold far-neighboring stretches of Michigan, for the sake of salvation!”<sup>6</sup> Celebrating how much had already been accomplished, Loehe encouraged ongoing support. “So far you have shared your strengths, with a few thousand guilders and a few missionaries given to a bunch of heathen tribes and nations, ... and sent out multitudes of evangelists to fill with joy and life one stretch of land, that of Ohio and Michigan, and to conquer the hearts of your fellow believers and the heathen, on whose ground they dwell, for the Lord!”<sup>7</sup> Instead of spreading thin their mission funds in multiple places, Loehe directs his readership to focus on Ohio and Michigan. “Do right once in one place what you ought, conquer one people, and you will strengthen yourselves for going on. Learn from the ruffians of this world who conquer a people in order to take them to war against other peoples!”<sup>8</sup>

Notice how ideas of possessing the one, right access to God are tied up with concepts of conquest. In the same breath that acknowledges Ojibwe land is being taken (“on whose ground they dwell”), Loehe encourages his followers to “conquer one people.” Some of Loehe’s conquest language applies to both fellow German believers and Ojibwe people. This is most clear when he refers to conquering their hearts. However, the impact

**Conquering the Ojibwe was not restricted to the spiritual realm. The vanquishing of indigenous people involved physical bodies and land. Within a decade of Loehe writing, it was no longer the case that Native Americans “still hold far-neighboring stretches of Michigan”; Ojibwe and other indigenous groups in Michigan had been forced off their ancestral lands and onto reservations. The mission concept that linked having the true religion with conquering people proved deadly.**

of conquering turned out differently for the settlers than it did for American Indians. It seems the conquering of the German immigrants was confined to a spiritual realm; it was about recovering their zeal for religious practices. Conquering the Ojibwe was not restricted to the spiritual realm. The vanquishing of indigenous people involved physical bodies and land. Within a decade of Loehe writing, it was no longer the case that Native Americans “still hold far-neighboring stretches of Michigan”; Ojibwe and other indigenous groups in Michigan had been forced off their ancestral lands and onto reservations. The mission concept that linked having the true religion with conquering people proved deadly.

Martos also identifies imposing religious correctness on others as a mark of Christian colonization.<sup>9</sup> Loehe often emphasized religious correctness, believing that “the Lutheran church has a purifying, refining, perfecting character, of which it has always been demonstrably aware.”<sup>10</sup> He did not only carry this view in relation to those outside the Christian faith. Even among Christians, Loehe practiced religious superiority, especially keen to elevate the Lutheran church above the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist churches. When

4. Wilhelm Loehe, *Three Books About the Church*, trans. and ed. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 162, 163.

5. David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019), 50.

6. Wilhelm Löhe, “Verbindung der inneren und äußern Mission betreffend,” *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* 3, no. 1 (1845): col. 3. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are from the author.

7. Löhe, col. 4.

8. Löhe, 4.

9. See the *Merriam-Webster* definition of colonization as “migration to and settlement in an inhabited or uninhabited area.” “Colonization,” Merriam-Webster online, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colonization>.

10. Wilhelm Löhe, “Die zweifache, innere und äußere, Mission der evangelischen Kirche,” *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* 1, no. 6 (1843): col. 6.

defending his *Agenda*, he wrote: “Should it be said that this is a romanizing agenda, then the same must be said of all Lutheran agendas, indeed of the entire Lutheran Church ... However, it would be more correct to say that, in those parts of the liturgy that are catholic, the Roman Church agrees with the truly catholic church (which, on earth, is known by the name ‘Lutheran’).”<sup>11</sup>

### *Moral and religious superiority*

Loehe recognized how much the loss of language and ties to people and place meant to confessional German Lutherans.

[Loehe] warned a Nothelfer in America not to yield a breadth more to the English than was absolutely necessary and useful for the German Lutheran Church ... “Your language is next to your church your greatest jewel. Consider what you forsake if you thoughtlessly discard this noble gift of God.” With their language they would, he stated, abandon their history, the easiest understanding of the Reformation and the true church of God, their wonderful German Bible, their inspiring songs, their incomparable catechism, their collections of sincere sermons, their books of edification, their liturgies and their domestic literature.<sup>12</sup>

Loehe knew that to lose one’s language and religion was tied to loss of one’s history, stories, rituals, and wisdom. Nevertheless, the schools set up for the Ojibwe expressly taught three things: German, English, and religion.

### *Benighted savages*

Even Martos’ critique that European Christian immigrants treated First Nations people as benighted savages strikes close to home. Upon arriving in Michigan, pastor and missionary August Craemer wrote some of his observations to Loehe:

Until now [Saginaw] is the center of commerce with the Indians who come to town daily in their canoes, frequently in the strangest outfits, with painted faces, feathers in their hats or around their heads, big rings in the ears and chains around the necks and chests, a bright scarf wrapped [*sic*] around their body, the legs in

11. Wilhelm Löhe, “Vorwort zur ersten Auflage,” *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses* (1st ed., 1844; 2nd ed., 1853/1859), in *Gesammelte Werke* (hereafter GW), vol. 7.1, ed. Klaus Ganzert (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1953), 11; as quoted in John W. Fenton, “Wilhelm Löhe’s *Hauptgottesdienst* (1844) as Critique of Luther’s *Deutsche Messe*,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2000): 140.

12. Homer Reginald Greenholt, “A Study of Wilhelm Loehe, His Colonies, and the Lutheran Indian Missions in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 22. The internal quote is from Wilhelm Löhe, “Ueberblick über der Stand der lutherischen Kirche in Nordamerika,” *Kirchliche Mittheilungen* 8, no. 8 (1850): col. 63. The list at end of the quote from Wilhelm Löhe, *Zuruf aus der Heimat an die deutsch-lutherische Kirche Nordamericas* (Stuttgart: Samuel G. Liesching, 1845), 30.

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semi-pants embroidered in red and tied under the knees with ribbons, frequently adorned with dozens of little bells and tin bracelets over the sleeves of ordinary French coats etc., but often wrapped [*sic*] only in a linen cloth. They are mostly harmless creatures, who’s [*sic*] spiritual and bodily destitution cuts you through the heart. Often they become drunkards intoxicated by gin and acting like animals. They know our house, occupied by all of us and Mr. and Mrs. Au. They visit us frequently to get some food. The only word they seem to know is ‘hungry’ after which they are given bread and butter.<sup>13</sup>

In this description, French coats are “ordinary” while traditional indigenous dress is exotified. Craemer compares Ojibwe to animals, calling them “creatures.” He labels them “drunkards,” but he does not challenge practices of addicting others, making people dependent, or using degrading tones in telling the stories of others.

Elements of Christian colonization that Martos names: attitudes of possessing true religion and religious correctness, moral and religious superiority, and seeing indigenous people as benighted savages are evidenced in Loehe’s colonies and the attitudes and practices of his contemporary followers as well as others who stand within his legacy.

### **Simultaneously concerning and insightful interpretations**

Liturgical events can help us draw out complexities in stories and position us to ask questions of these practices. Responding to missionary Eduard Raimund Baier-

13. August Craemer, “Letter from Craemer to Löhe, Saginaw City, 25 July 1845,” trans. by A. F. Kozak, Reu Memorial Library Archives, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, 1.

Citing a “Letter from Craemer to Loehe, Frankenmut, February 3, 1846” (not found in the Wartburg Seminary digitized collection), in which Craemer offers his perspective of Native American behavior on pay-day in Saginaw, Greenholt writes: “[Craemer] said that he lacked the ability to describe the cannibalistic noises, the animalistic brutishness and the drunkenness which prevailed among them. He declared that ‘one felt the devil moved about bodily in those beasts whose love of drink was used by fur traders to take away all their money.’ In their fury they even tried to break into his house early one morning. As he summarized the situation it appeared that work with this ‘devilish race’ would be futile unless attended by the miraculous.” Greenholt, “A Study of Wilhelm Loehe,” 169.

lein's sermon, an Ojibwe person wondered aloud, "What do these things have to do with the zodiacal lights?"<sup>14</sup>

This question about an atmospheric phenomenon—a pyramid of hazy light reflecting off particles of dust on the horizon at dawn or dusk<sup>15</sup>—seems to arise from genuine curiosity. It is the question of someone who is engaging with the sermon in the context of his own lifeworld—an encouraging gift for religious, intercultural dialogue, one might think. However, Baierlein reports it as proof of circumstances in mission to the Ojibwe that are "not very inspiring, and do not make preaching in a strange language, assisted by an interpreter, very easy."<sup>16</sup> How did Baierlein arrive at this conclusion, and what beneficial connections and problematic disregard were afoot?

In the first chapter of his memoir of his years in Michigan—presumably from early in his mission work—Baierlein writes of his knowledge of some of the atrocities of white settler colonialism:

Like the wild game that [the Ojibwe] hunt, they themselves are looked upon as animals and are hunted. That is why they live so far from the white conquerors of their land. For the Indians, it is only in the extreme far-off distance where they can find security. Those that stay close to the white man will soon be soaked up by civilization, as is the snow by the March sunshine. Oh bitter grief! that civilization and Christian people have to be such a stumbling block to the savages, against whom they rush, stumble, and dash to pieces. What powerful preachers are these forsaken burial grounds of the Indian for the descendants of the white conquerors and the deaf ears to whom they preach! Heartless, thankless, the plows will be pulled across them and their place will be known no more.<sup>17</sup>

In his telling, Baierlein uses the derogatory term "savages" but also notices and clearly names systemic atrocities being perpetuated against Ojibwe. Living distant from settler colonists was a survival strategy for indigenous people. Baierlein notes this when he reports that Ojibwe are being hunted—an active form of extermination. He is clear that living near colonists is an unsafe location for Ojibwe, whom colonists will either "soak up" or "dash to pieces."

14. Eduard Raimund Baierlein, *In the Wilderness with the Red Indians: German Missionary to the Michigan Indians, 1847-1853* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 59.

15. Deborah Byrd and Bruce McClure, "Zodiacal Light: All You Need to Know," *EarthSky*, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/everything-you-need-to-know-zodiacal-light-or-false-dawn/>. Note that Zodiacal light differs from the Northern Lights or aurora borealis, which appear as dancing waves of light due to the interaction of the sun's eclectically charged particles colliding with gases in the Earth's atmosphere. They occur more at the poles because the Earth's magnetic field is weaker there, allowing through more charged particles.

16. Baierlein, *In the Wilderness*, 59.

17. Baierlein, 26.

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### Legacy: Problems in the United States' context

While many Euro-American scholars have used the term "legacy" almost entirely positively—to indicate valuable contributions from a predecessor who influences life or thought today, the actual definition is "something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past."<sup>18</sup> Thus, "legacy" includes anything transmitted, whether admirable or detrimental.

A nearly hagiographic lens applied to Loehe's story has transmitted a lopsided legacy lacking critique, and thereby legitimizing Lutheran participation in colonial practices. Over time legacied presentations of a dominant narrative can aggregate to decrease access to multiple perspectives and limit the viability of diverse stories. Consider how retellings limited in scope perpetuate the danger of a single story:<sup>19</sup>

In 1929, the Wartburg Seminary professor George J. Zeilinger wrote of Loehe's mission among the Apsáalooke and Cheyenne. He characterizes Loehe's motivation in this way:

When Loehe was moved to offer his great love for Christ's Church on the altar of American missions, ... there appeared before his eye the tragic figures of the former lords of this vast kingdom of the west, disinherited, often imposed upon, hopeless, sorrowing indeed as those who have no hope. And Loehe's heart went out to these poor heathen ... because the love of Christ constrained him.<sup>20</sup>

Zeilinger assesses Loehe's motivation to have members of the Iowa Synod do mission to the Apsáalooke and Cheyenne as rooted in love of Christ and love for Christ's church. At the same time, this text reveals an objectification of First Nations people: they are tragic figures, former lords, poor heathen. The missionaries are positioned as the good guys who have agency; the Apsáalooke and Cheyenne are cast as hopeless, sorrowing recipients in need of white people's saving.

18. "Legacy," *Merriam-Webster* online, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legacy>.

19. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (video), TED (website), July 2009, [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en).

20. G. J. Zeilinger, *A Missionary Synod with a Mission: A Memoir for the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States* (Chicago: Wartburg Pub. House, 1929), 31.

In 1936, author Alvin Klein praised German missionary zeal:

A man like Loehe could not long occupy himself with the work among the Lutherans in America without, at the same time, also becoming imbued with a desire to do something for the heathen aborigines of that continent, namely the American Indians, particularly [*sic*] since he lived in a period that witnessed the awakening of missionary zeal in all parts of the Christian Church ... To bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ, Loehe considered to be one of the most important obligations of the Protestant Church, whereby it might make amends for the injustices and cruelties inflicted upon the Red Man by members of that branch of Christendom. Because German Lutherans have had little if any part in the sin committed against the Indian, they are not to think that they do not share with other Protestants the obligation of doing mission work on his behalf.<sup>21</sup>

Although Klein knows about Christian injustices against indigenous people, he exonerates German Lutherans while using an offensive color descriptor, unchosen by Ojibwe. Furthermore, he fails to examine Loehe's role in land acquisition and forced movement of indigenous people, but he does reason poorly, in my view, that harm at the hands of Christians means that more Christians are now responsible to do mission to American Indians.

In 1985, Gerhard Schmutterer, professor of German studies at Augustana College (Sioux Falls, South Dakota), lauds Loehe's missionary methods, including buying up land "at the edge of the frontier:"

Loehe had a magnificent vision of how to evangelize the American Indians. He would plant at the edge of the frontier entire Christian colonies, rather than single gospel-bearers... The colonies became thriving centers of German Lutheranism, but as mission outposts they disappointed. As soon as the colonists settled, the Indians moved on north and west, and the colonies could not move with them... Yet, the work was not without fruit. When the community of Frankenmuth celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1920, an elderly Indian was there to offer a short address; he delivered it in German!<sup>22</sup>

Even though Schmutterer notes that "as soon as the colonists settled, the Indians moved," he misses the connection that purchasing Ojibwe land made life less tenable for the Ojibwe and thereby participated in forcing Ojibwe people off their land. Moreover, Schmutterer cites as proof of the colony's fruitfulness that an

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Ojibwe elder spoke in German at Frankenmuth's anniversary. This white-centered analysis fails to see that an Ojibwe person using the settlers' language for a celebration of a colony "owned" largely by German immigrants but on Ojibwe ancestral lands is evidence of colonization itself and not *missio Dei*.

In many excerpts from his 1997 book, biographer Adolf Bickel speaks positively of unidirectional mission to Ojibwe:

Loehe did not merely plan to preach the Word of God to the Indians, but he was sending colonists to support the missionaries who would also be an example to the Indians.<sup>23</sup> These colonies did not only bear fruit spiritually but also materially ... They are rich communities. Frankenmuth is a town that has become famous for its prosperity. This wealth has not been selfishly hoarded. These Franconian Colonies have generously contributed for the expansion of the Christian Church in the United States, and in the world.<sup>24</sup>

Bickel applauds the use of wealth gained on ancestral lands being used to continue Christian expansionism. Navajo pastor and writer Mark Charles says, "The creation of a Christian empire forced a paradigm on the church that was never imagined at its beginning ... Empires are concerned with self-preservation, conquest, and expansion."<sup>25</sup> While Bickel and others have celebrated Christian expansionism, Charles argues it is opposed to the Christian vision of the early church.

A responsibility settles near those who tell Loehe's legacy. Multiplied reproductions of his legacy, especially when from similar uncritical perspectives, generate the conditions under which an author in 1997 can still be replicating positions more aligned with manifest destiny than with racial equity. Bickel did have access to more judicious thinking about the colonial project in the United States as well as the incorporation of an accompaniment model into mission, but instead he followed the tradition in which the Loehe legacy had been told. Standing in the tradition, people of

21. Alvin A. Klein, "The Lutheran Colonies in Saginaw County Michigan: As an Experiment in Church Colonization" (master's thesis, Wartburg Theological Seminary, 1936).

22. Gerhard M. Schmutterer and Charles P. Lutz, "Mission Martyr on the Western Frontier" in *Church Roots: Stories of Nine Immigrant Groups that Became the American Lutheran Church*, ed. Charles P. Lutz (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 124-125.

23. Adolf M. Bickel, *Our Forgotten Founding Father: A Biography of Pastor William Loehe* (Napoleon, Ohio: A. M. Bickel, 1997), 31-32.

24. Bickel, 43.

25. Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2019), 58.

many times have continued legaced practices longer than they might rightly have done otherwise. A couple of things become clear: it remains the case that scholars get to draw on aspects of the legacy on which they wish to build *and* that omitting problematic impacts of an emblematic figure's legacy limits what subsequent generations might learn. The legacy of western and Christian expansion includes the genocide of indigenous people, along with loss of culture and language. Loehe's legacy bestows on us a relationship to that expansionism and a responsibility for how we replicate the story and relate to indigenous people.

### Who are the Disinherited?

Those disinherited in Loehe's legacy include the Ojibwe people. Because forms of dispossession have not been fully or adequately acknowledged, they remain largely invisible, which is itself a form of ongoing disinheritance.

It was from Howard Thurman in his seminal work *Jesus and the Disinherited* that I first heard the disinherited described. Thurman recognizes the disinherited in many ways throughout the book; they are the poor, the dispossessed, those with their backs against a wall, the marginalized, those facing destructive and dominating powers, those who "assume that there are no basic citizenship rights, no fundamental protection, guaranteed to them by the state, because their status as citizens has never been clearly defined."<sup>26</sup>

The church's missionary practices have caused harm by treating "our neighbors as objects of missionary endeavor and enterprise without being at all willing to treat them either as brothers or as human beings. I say this without rancor, because it is not an issue in which vicious human beings are involved. But it is one of the subtle perils of a religion which calls attention ... to one's obligation to administer to human need."<sup>27</sup>

How does a church obligated to care for the poor avoid making those experiencing poverty objects who receive money from good people? For Thurman, Jesus himself stands as key to this conundrum. As one made vulnerable by his position in society, Jesus stands as disinherited in a world that, out of fear and misunderstanding, sought to eliminate him.

### Loehe on confession

Acknowledging practices of disregard and disinheritance that pepper the pasts of our institutions and ancestors provides us with a call toward confession. During his years in Neuendettelsau, Loehe renewed the community's practices around confession. The system of confession (*Beichtwesen*) he taught included announcement (*Anmeldung*), confession itself (*Beichte*), and Eucharist (*Abendmahl*).<sup>28</sup> Today this three-fold path can provide increased recogni-

**L**oehe was primarily focused on the confession and remediation of individual sins. Although a land acknowledgement invites reflection on personal attitudes and behaviors, it is largely focused on naming historic and corporate sin.

tion of the need to repent of communal, historic, and ongoing injury to Native American communities. In contrast to Loehe and the church's focus on personal behavior as sin, the exploration below offers contemporary insights about systemic injustice and sinfulness.

### Announcement

Preparation for Sunday Eucharist began with people announcing their own commitment to ready themselves for Eucharist through participation in confession. For Loehe, the announcement was not a perfunctory policy of recording but "a purposeful encounter between the pastor and the individual parishioner, which could include catechesis, an examination of conscience and behavior, pastoral encouragement or warnings to repentance."<sup>29</sup>

The announcement had an expanded significance in Loehe's congregation.

Though Loehe's first step—announcing readiness to prepare for confession and the table—is not a common practice in congregations today, I want to explore how a land acknowledgement might function as such an announcement. A land acknowledgement is "a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories."<sup>30</sup> In what ways is it apt to think of a land acknowledgement functioning as an announcement in Loehe's

Lord's Supper in the Pastoral-Liturgical Work of Wilhelm Löhe: A Study of Worship and Church Life in the Lutheran Parish at Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, 1837-1872" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1990), 41-42.

29. Schattauer, 41-42. Discipline, even public discipline, was a key aspect of Loehe's development of the announcement that I only briefly acknowledge but do not treat fully here. I consider Loehe's forms of discipline outside of the scope of this paper, especially because historically nuanced translation would be needed.

30. "Land Acknowledgement," Native American and Indigenous Initiatives, Northwestern University (website), accessed July 18, 2022, <https://www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html>. See also, "Acknowledgement of Land and Sovereignty," Native American Council, University of Iowa (website), accessed July 18, 2022, <https://nativeamericancouncil.org.uiowa.edu/acknowledgement-land-and-sovereignty#:~:text=A%20Land%20Acknowledgement%20is%20a,Peoples%20and%20their%20traditional%20territories.>

26. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 25.

27. Thurman, 3. Recall the quotation from Arthur Klein that celebrates Loehe's good work of missionizing and suggests that is a Christian obligation.

28. Thomas H. Schattauer, "Announcement, Confession, and

terms? Could a land acknowledgement articulate readiness to prepare for confession?

In the spring of 2022, at the request of Wartburg Seminary's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) task force, a student-led group composed this land acknowledgement:

We at Wartburg Theological Seminary acknowledge our campus occupies ancestral lands stolen by the United States government and white colonizers from the Sauk, Meskwaki, Myaamia, Hoocąk, Potawatami, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, and Kiikaapoi peoples.<sup>31</sup>

The larger Wartburg Seminary community, where our staff, faculty, graduates, and students reside and work also occupies stolen lands first given to native nations by the Creator.

We acknowledge the ways actions and inactions of white colonizers have taken away this land from its original use as home, transit hub, and place of connection for Indigenous people. We grieve the colonizing mentality that continues making invisible the Indigenous folks who first cared for and continue to reside on this land.

This acknowledgement is just the first step in a longer journey towards justice for Indigenous peoples. Therefore, we commit to building relationships, and seek to honor, uplift and support Indigenous individuals and communities.<sup>32</sup>

This statement does do the work of acknowledging that the land on which Wartburg Seminary's building and people reside was seized from multiple indigenous groups. It recognizes with grief that both actions and inactions of settler colonists sanctioned land grabs from American Indians. It also clearly asserts that this statement is only a first step toward repairing the breach. It has been said: "Indigenous communities have not forgotten the sins of both commission and omission in this lamentable legacy. In contrast, a keystone characteristic of settler 'unknowing' is that we are illiterate and uninterested in treaty history, and thus harbor no sense of accountability to these covenants (or lack of them)."<sup>33</sup>

31. Pronunciation guides are sometimes included with land acknowledgements in order to honor indigenous peoples by giving care and practice to the speaking of names. Sauk (Saak), Meskwaki (Mesquakie), Myaamia (Me-YAH-me-yah), Hoocąk (Ho-Chunk), Potawatami (Pow-tuh-waa-tuh-mee), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Oh-chey-tee Shah-koh-ween), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo).

32. Treaties established to steal land in and around Dubuque: Treaty with the Sauk and Fox and Ioway Indians, August 4, 1824; Treaty of Black Hawk Purchase, September 21, 1832; Treaty with the Sacs and Foxes, September 27, 1836; Treaty with the Sauk and Fox, October 11, 1842; Treaty with Potawatomi Nation, June 5 and 17, 1846. See the following web links: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/04/06/can-indigenous-landback-movement-secure-self-determination/>; <https://www.meskwaki.org/history/>; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sac\\_and\\_Fox\\_treaty\\_of\\_1842](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sac_and_Fox_treaty_of_1842).

33. Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories: A*

**That the composers of this confession found it necessary to interrupt the rhythmic cadence of confession and teach is telling. Too often confession has become mere words detached from the new living into which God calls the repentant.**

Acknowledging land is an important part of remembering and becoming literate in our community's histories.

In addition to being first steps in longer processes, land acknowledgements and Loehe's announcement share other similarities. Although necessary, acknowledgment alone is inadequate; the same could be said of the announcement. Furthermore, in Loehe's pattern the announcement could, but did not always, include five additional forms of accompaniment: teaching, examining one's conscience, interrogating one's actions, offering encouragement, and/or signaling problematic brokenness. A seminary could provide students, visitors, board members, staff, or faculty who participate in announcing this land acknowledgement similar forms of accompaniment such as education, challenge, encouragement, and/or a look at one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

While the above overlap between announcement and acknowledgement exists, there are also ways in which a land acknowledgement differs substantially from Loehe's idea of announcement. For example, although the five forms of additional accompaniment were optional, the announcement's relational connection between a speaker and a religious leader was unavoidable. A land acknowledgement, however, could be proclaimed without forging accountability partners. For a land acknowledgement to function as an announcement in Loehe's terms, it would not be a unidirectional statement, but an internal examination *and* an external and mutual call into the ongoing work of confession. The one who announces enters into a relationship of accountability with another. In Neuendettelsau, a person's announcement predictably resulted in the next step of confession heard by Loehe. This promise of mutuality—that is, access to a next step of confession in the context of a relationship of accountability—could happen in extraordinary cases but is not assured in the case of land acknowledgements. A land acknowledgement in a seminary setting does not automatically elicit a formal mechanism or well-stewarded process for follow-up, and the many possible future actions toward which the acknowledgement points move beyond confession only; future actions might be as multiple and varied as the plethora of steps in processes of reparation and transformation. The above

*Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2021), 188.

land acknowledgement does declare itself as a first step that will be followed up by subsequent action, and the authors did secure promises from some faculty, the DEI team, and the Board of Directors that this land acknowledgement would be a first among many steps. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the statement cannot create that reality on its own; it is left to the many people invested in it to steward next steps. A final difference I will name between Loehe's system of announcement and a contemporary land acknowledgement is that Loehe was primarily focused on the confession and remediation of individual sins. Although a land acknowledgement invites reflection on personal attitudes and behaviors, it is largely focused on naming historic and corporate sin.

In sum, land acknowledgements and Loehe's announcement are not identical, but there is benefit in considering their overlap. Wartburg Seminary's land acknowledgement functions in many ways as an announcement of readiness to prepare for confession and communion. Loehe's implementation of accompanied interventions and consistent follow-up in the form of confession and communion could serve to strengthen a land acknowledgement's commitment to the promise embedded in it: that it is not an end in itself but a first step in a longer process including confession and repair.

### Confession

What could we have to confess? Announcing ourselves as ones who stand in the Loehe legacy, we identify with the whole of his legacy. This includes scores of praiseworthy pieces—prolific writings, thorough liturgical research, engaged preaching, renewed liturgical practices extending beyond Sunday morning, dedication to serving marginalized communities, etc. It also contains problematic portions—namely participation in purchasing ancestral homeland, building on Ojibwe, Apsáalooke, and Cheyenne territory, increasing precarity of life and livelihood for marginalized people, functioning with unexamined lenses of religious and racial superiority. Knowing this breadth of legacy, we cannot choose silence, for to do so perpetuates a silencing of the disinherited, which is a dishonor to the spirit of the Loehe legacy *in toto*. Instead of silence, it is possible to speak confession and seek communion.

Confession tells the truth, speaking it as plainly as possible. Confession asks God to be merciful for Jesus' sake and petitions God to make us new in relation to God, the rest of humanity, and creation. The newness God gives is made a mockery when treated as an end itself—“I'm ok now.” Instead, we confess our roles in the disinheritance of others. Confession names harm, both harm I have done and harmful systems in which I have wittingly or unwittingly participated.

The new life God gives is for the life of the world, meaning that confessing, asking for mercy, and receiving new life inherently includes action. Consider this excerpt from a confession for the Day of Racial Healing:

**C**onfession itself catalyzes action. By naming the gap between the brokenness of the world as it is and the goodness of the world as it could be in light of God's glory, a tension is identified that welcomes the one making confession to become a repairer of the breach.

As church, we confess the sin of racism and condemn racist rhetoric and the ideology of white supremacy. God, have mercy.

**God, have mercy.**

...

As church, we declare that the enslavement of black bodies and the removal of indigenous peoples established racism in the United States, a truth this nation and this church have yet to fully embrace. God, have mercy.

**God, have mercy.**

...

Confessions are empty promises without meaningful actions—actions that are grounded in prayer, education, and soul-searching repentance. The sin of racism separates us from one another. Though we trust that we are reconciled to God through Christ's death and resurrection, we seek such life-giving reconciliation with one another. As we repent, let us not turn back to ideologies that promote white supremacy. We trust that God can make all things new.

**Amen.**<sup>34</sup>

In the portion of the confession included above we observe a plain-spoken naming that racism is sin, that slavery of Black people and forced removal of First Nations people established a foundation of racial oppression in the United States, and that the church has not fully attended to these realities. Repeatedly throughout this confession, the leader pleads, “God, have mercy,” to which the assembly assents, adding their own voices beseeching God's mercy. This confession turns into a teaching statement: “Confessions are empty promises without meaningful actions.” Since action is an intrinsic part of confession, this instruction could seem out of place and unnecessary. That the composers of this confession

34. “Worship Resources for the Day of Racial Healing,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (website), accessed 29 June 2022, [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship\\_Resources\\_for\\_Day\\_of\\_Racial\\_Healing.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship_Resources_for_Day_of_Racial_Healing.pdf).

Those who have benefitted from histories of domination and are telling the stories of figures who likewise benefitted from and/or perpetuated cultural superiority carry an obligation to tell whole legacies—including troubling aspects.

found it necessary to interrupt the rhythmic cadence of confession and teach is telling. Too often confession has become mere words detached from the new living into which God calls the repentant.

The exhortation to general confession in Loehe's *Agenda* exhorts those making confession to an active turning away from wrongdoing and repairing the breach.<sup>35</sup> Loehe's activated confession encourages the church's authentic and active reckoning with the fact it has historically benefitted (and still benefits) from colonial practices. Over the years, liturgical leaders have asked how to restore confession that leads to active repair. Loehe thought private confession better supported activated confession than the overused general confession because private confession better provided for the conditions under which teaching, pastoral care, or cautioning could take place before delivery of the absolution.<sup>36</sup> Today, buttressing words of confession with an intervention, e.g., teaching, could assist the speaker as God activates their confession to become a repairer of the breach. What interventions already happen or could accompany confession in communal worship?

Loehe named five types of confession: fixed formula, free form, conversational, course of life, and prevention of false pride.<sup>37</sup>

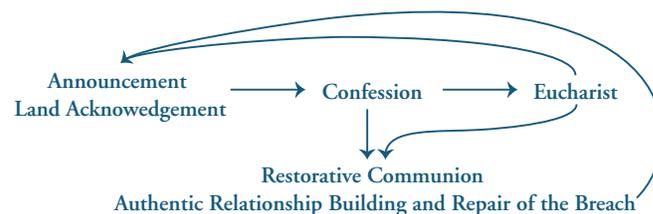
Loehe understood that confessional formulas (*Formelbeichte*) have their place, but he considered a fixed articulation to be a perfunctory form of confession. Loehe urged "a personal and free confession from the heart."<sup>38</sup> While the above Day of Racial Healing confession is a fixed formula, I am unconvinced it fits well into Loehe's confessional formula category or critique. There is a difference between a fixed formula that is repeated from rote memorization and one written to welcome many to voice specific repentance. Likewise, there is also a difference between any confession written by another and the one that roils to the surface within a person—from the heart as it were. How might the Racial Healing confession fit within Loehe's taxonomy? Perhaps this confession of white supremacy, cultural superiority, and the disinheritance of people is a hybrid—somewhere between a fixed formula and a

course of life confession (*Beichte zum Lebens lauf*).

Taking seriously both Loehe's *Agenda* and the Racial Healing confession's exhortation to rejoin confession and repair requires increased stamina for discomfort. There is a way in which confession calls people to sustain discomfort in the active turning-from-sin phase of confession that precedes absolution as to not make false absolution. Confession bids people to increase stamina to stand in the discomfort of the liminal zone where repair is named and worked toward. In the face of communal sin, confession will be iterative—returned to multiple times—repeatedly naming the wrong and receiving the life-giving call of God's absolution that creates the new humans God is crafting. Iterative confession could hold one in an *exitus/reditus* pattern of confession of sin and reception of God's continual outpouring of mercy, hope, and grace.

### Communion

I would argue that a double movement toward restorative communion is born of confession. While Loehe may not highlight a double movement, it is latent in his description of the movement from announcement to communion. First, he claims that confession itself catalyzes action. By naming the gap between the brokenness of the world as it is and the goodness of the world as it could be in light of God's glory, a tension is identified that welcomes the one making confession to become a repairer of the breach. Confession itself, therefore, catalyzes acts of restorative communion such as building authentic relationships that follow the lead of those whom society has disinherited. It is crucial to note that the guilt of decedents of colonists is not an appropriate reason, motivation, or basis for building relationships. Starting a relationship with indigenous people to assuage one's feelings of collective guilt is a form of centering oneself and exploiting native people to extract comfort or goods; this is wrong and unacceptable. Be honest with yourself and form relationships when love, mutuality, and respect can be the foundation.



Second, confession moves one toward Eucharist, which itself generates restorative communion. In Loehe's liturgical practice, announcement led to confession, and confession led to communion, which he understood to be communion with Jesus and the church. Loehe considered the Lord's Supper "the central activity—or better, the center of God's activity—in the life of the church."<sup>39</sup> The Eucharist moves people toward communion with God and others; God generates, in the Eucharist, shared communion. Loehe worked to evidence this truth theologically, spiritually, and through practices.

35. Loehe, *Agende*, GW 7.1:414-416.

36. Schattauer, "Announcement, Confession, and Lord's Supper," 107, 116.

37. Schattauer, 137.

38. Schattauer, 118.

39. Schattauer, 189.

In the announcement-confession-communion paradigm, communion is the most clearly embodied action. Jesus is manifest among worshippers, creating body of Christ in the image of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The real body of Christ does not exist to have an insulated life *incurvatus in se* (curved in on oneself); rather, the body of Christ exists for the life of the world. In his seminal work *For the Life of the World*, Alexander Schmemmann writes that “in Christ, life—life in all its totality—was returned to man, given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist.” He goes on to show “the meaning of this for our mission in the world.”<sup>40</sup> In Eucharist, the body encounters Jesus and is made witnesses of “what [Christ] has done and is ever doing.”<sup>41</sup> Encountering Christ impels one to notice Christ’s orientation in the world toward those dispossessed and to form oneself likewise as one who accompanies people whose backs the world has pressed against the wall. The Eucharist, then, is also an event that invites increased authentic relationship building with and following the lead of the disinherited in order to walk toward repair of significant breaches.

Both confession and Eucharist lead to actions like reparation or building relationships of mutuality. Both Eucharist (a liturgical form of *communio*) and restorative communion (an ecclesial form of *communio*)<sup>42</sup> engage people in the need of the world since “Christian existence flows from Word and sacrament”<sup>43</sup> and become feedback loops that return people to a recognition of their need to prepare for confession. What might some of these actions of reparation and participation be? For that, we turn to reflections on liturgies and lives mattering.

### Living liturgies and lives mattering

Liturgies can remind us of who we are and to whom we are accountable, encourage us to return regularly to confession, and help us forge new paths forward in Word and at table. Baierlein writes in a homiletical reflection: “What powerful preachers are these forsaken burial grounds of the Indian for the descendants of the white conquerors and the deaf ears to whom they preach!”<sup>44</sup> Ojibwe burial grounds bear witness and give interpretation, convicting “descendants of the white conquerors” on account of the millions of American Indians killed in forced marches, slaughter, and by diseases brought by settlers as the indigenous population in the United States went from 10 million when European settlers arrived to under 300,000 by 1900.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, Baierlein

does not think his plea for settlers to learn from burial grounds will be heeded; descendants are unlikely, he supposes, to hear the conviction and repent. It is more likely, Baierlein predicts, that these proclamatory burial grounds will be plowed under and erased from the surface of the earth.

What do these covered over burial grounds preach to us today?

### Conclusion

Those who have benefitted from histories of domination and are telling the stories of figures who likewise benefitted from and/or perpetuated cultural superiority carry an obligation to tell whole legacies—including troubling aspects. Renewed practices of acknowledgement or announcement of our need to repent, confession, and Eucharist/restorative communion can help meet this challenge and address our communal complicity and responsibility. Excavating troubling parts of our shared terrain honors Loehe’s legacy of supporting distinctively Christian community through announcement and confession for the purpose of greater *communio*. It is also a step in honoring Ojibwe lives and voices. It is time to listen for what the stones, tombs, and survivors are preaching.

40. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2018), 28.

41. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 58.

42. Thomas H. Schattauer, “Reclaiming the Christian Assembly as *Communio*: The Significance of the Lord’s Supper in the Work of Wilhelm Löhe,” *Worship* 84, no. 3 (2010): 232.

43. Thomas H. Schattauer, “The Reconstruction of Rite: The Liturgical Legacy of Wilhelm Löhe,” in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B.*, eds. Nathan Mitchell and John F. Baldovin (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 253.

44. Baierlein, *In the Wilderness*, 26.

45. “Genocide of Indigenous Peoples,” Holocaust Museum

Houston (website), accessed July 13, 2022, <https://hnh.org/library/research/genocide-of-indigenous-peoples-guide/>. Scholars have offered widely divergent numbers of deaths. David Michael Smith provides an overview of views along with his conclusions in “Counting the Dead: Estimating the Loss of Life in the Indigenous Holocaust, 1492-Present,” Proceedings of the Twelfth Native American Symposium 2017, November 3, 2017, Native American Institute, Southeastern Oklahoma State University (website), <https://www.se.edu/native-american/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2019/09/A-NAS-2017-Proceedings-Smith.pdf>.

## Stone Mother

by Tanaya Winder

I.

I was born in the desert  
learned to cherish water  
like it was created from tears.

I grew up hearing the legend, the lesson  
of the Stone Mother who cried  
enough cries to make an entire lake  
from sadness. From her, we learned  
what must be done and that the sacrifices  
you make for your people are sacred.  
We are all related  
and sometimes it takes  
a revolution to be awakened.

You see, the power of a single tear lies in the story.  
It's birthed from feeling and following  
the pain as it echoes into the canyon of grieving.  
It's the path you stumble and walk  
until you push and claw your way through  
to acceptance.  
For us, stories have always been for lessons.

II.

I remember my grandmother was well versed in dirt,  
the way the earth clung to her hands  
as if it were a part of her.  
We come from the earth. So she tended the seeds  
as living beings, planted her garden full of foods  
traditional to the land and handled them with care.  
Every tree, plant, or rock has a spirit, she said "hear it."

III.

I listen.

When my mother says words are seeds and to be careful  
of the words you say, I pray. For I know each seed  
carries a story.

My mother taught me that water is the source  
of all living things and to honor life like the circle  
we sit in for ceremony. From the doorway in  
to the doorway out, life is about all our relations.

IV.

Before I was born, they tried to silence us,  
pierced our tongues with needles then taught  
our then-girl-grandmothers how to sew like machines.  
You see, colonialism has always been  
about them not seeing us as human but as object,  
a thing. Conquest meant they saw our bodies as land,  
full of resources waiting to be extracted and exploited.

Our land was stolen.

Our language. Our grandmothers, grandfathers, fathers,  
sisters, mothers, brothers, daughters, sons, children,  
nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and ancestors.

Our Mother Earth holds our histories in her dirt.  
But today, she burns not in the traditional ways once  
taught, controlled and deliberate.  
Today she burns desperate,  
for all to resist fossil fuels, the drilling,  
and the black snake named greed that swallows  
everything.

V.

When you lose something, you hope it will be found.  
When something is stolen, you want it returned.  
We've had our land stolen and we're losing it again  
unless we all take action for the climate to change.

VI.

Land back is a demand, a stand  
against the Age of Exploration and Extraction,  
a call for the Time of Reconciliation,  
the Now of Restoration.

Land back is an understanding  
that tomorrow isn't promised, but today we can return  
the power to the earth and her stewards.

And those who wish to stand with us  
must take action beyond the performative  
where Indigenous consulting isn't just  
a costume of free and informed consent,  
where consulting with tribal nations  
isn't just a box one checks without due diligence,  
where co-management isn't co-opted  
just for the optics of equity, diversity, and justice.

Stand with us as accomplices.

Follow our lead for we have always been well versed in  
survival.

We were shaped by fire, made from lightning and  
dirt-covered hands that know when to ignite healing.  
Now is the time. Let us not drown in Mother Earth's tears.  
Mother Earth has a spirit and she's asking us to listen.<sup>46</sup>

46. Tanaya Winder, "Stone Mother" (video and transcript), *Five Indigenous Poets Explore Loss and Love of their Native Lands*, November 1, 2021, Natural Resource Defense Council (website), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/five-indigenous-poets-explore-loss-and-love-their-native-lands>.