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# Wilhelm Löhe's *Hauptgottesdienst* (1844) as Critique of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*

John W. Fenton

## *Two Streams in the Lutheran Hauptgottesdienst*

In the span of a dozen years two significant *Agenden*, or books of liturgy, made their debut in congregations that became members of the Missouri Synod. Wilhelm Löhe compiled and published the first in 1844, entitled *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, specifically for use in American Lutheran frontier congregations. He dedicated it to Pastor Friedrich Wyneken.<sup>1</sup> In 1856 the *Kirchen-Agende für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession*, "compiled from the old orthodox Saxon Church Agendas," was published by (and for) the Missouri Synod.<sup>2</sup> Published specifically by and for participants in the nineteenth-century Lutheran "Confessional Revival" movement, these *Agenden* represent two different streams of Lutheran liturgical theory and practice, specifically in regard to the *Hauptgottesdienst* (the celebration of Holy Communion). In general terms, these two streams may be grouped around the two mass orders published by Martin Luther: the 1523 *Formula Missae et Communionis pro Ecclesia Vuitembergensis* and the 1526

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<sup>1</sup>This work will hereafter be referred to as *Agende* (1844). A second expanded edition of Löhe's *Agende* was published in 1853 and so will be referenced as *Agende* (1853). This edition, with the forwards to the first and second editions, is what appears in the critical edition of Löhe's *Gesammelte Werke*, VII/1, 9-487. The second edition is equivalent to the first edition in the rite of the *Hauptgottesdienst*, but expands the rubrics, adds extensive explanatory footnotes, and includes an appendix of liturgical music arranged by Friderich Layriz. For this reason, *GW* VII/1 will be referenced when the two forwards and the second edition (1853) are cited, but citations from the first edition (1844) will be referenced to an original copy. A paraphrastic and abridged translation of the third edition of Löhe's *Agende* appeared as *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith*, translated by F. C. Longaker (Newport, Kentucky: n.p., 1902).

<sup>2</sup>This work shall hereafter be referred to as 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*.

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*Deutsche Messe und ordnung des Gottis diensts*.<sup>3</sup> The former stream is embodied in the "Ordnung der Gottesdienste: Die Communion oder der Hauptgottesdienst" of Löhe's *Agende*, while the latter stream is embodied in the "Hauptgottesdienst an Sonn- und Festtagen mit Communion" of the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*. Because the founding pastors and congregations of the Missouri Synod were either Franconians (two-thirds) or Saxons (one-third) and were insistent on orthodox Lutheran teaching and liturgy, it is safe to assume that prior to the synodically mandated 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*, Missouri Synod "pastors generally used either the Saxon Agenda or Löhe's Agenda."<sup>4</sup> Since 1856, one stream or the other has dominated large periods of Missouri's liturgical landscape, yet neither has disappeared. Thus, both flow side by side in Missouri's present-day official hymnals.

These liturgical streams retain the structure of the western rite mass, though cleansed by Luther of theological and liturgical accretions, innovations, and errors. That structure has two interdependent parts, the "Liturgy of the Word" and the "Liturgy of the Eucharist," with each part having predetermined propers and ordinaries.<sup>5</sup> With certain exceptions (less in the *Formula Missae*, more in the *Deutsche Messe*), the historic propers and ordinaries of the western rite are retained. The chief exception, and Luther's major reform of the mass, is the omission of the canon of the mass and certain propers, such

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<sup>3</sup>WA 12.205-220; translated into English in *Liturgy and Hymns*, edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, *Luther's Works*, volume 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 19-40. Citations from this edition will be abbreviated LW. WA 19.72-113; English translation: "The German Mass and Order of Service" (LW 53:61-90).

<sup>4</sup>Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, revised edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 176. By "Saxon Agenda" Reed is referring to one of the "alten rechtgläubigen Sächsischen Kirchenagenden" mentioned on the title page of the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*. Fred Precht asserts that *Agende* (1844) "was largely used by congregations in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana, until it was gradually supplanted by the official agenda of the Synod" (Fred Precht, "Worship Resources in Missouri Synod's History" in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993], 85).

<sup>5</sup>*Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, 366-368.

as the *Secreta* and any thing else in the offertory because "from here on almost everything smacks and savors of sacrifice."<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Lochner evaluates Luther's reforms as follows:

Luther proceeded with extreme caution and forbearance according to the principles drawn from the inmost lifespring of Scripture and truly evangelical practice. Following these principles, he unrelentingly swept out everything that was intrinsically papistic leaven and part of the abominable sacrifice of the mass, even though it had only the odor of sacrifice.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, Luther released the words of Our Lord's Testament from any encumbrance so that they were highlighted as the pinnacle of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.<sup>8</sup> Other noticeable changes common to both forms that Luther made in the propers and ordinaries include changing nearly all the first person pronouns in the prayers from singular to plural, omitting the *Offertorium* (chanted psalm or psalm verse while the altar is prepared), changing the *Post-communio* (the collect after the distribution) from a proper to an ordinary, eliminating the *Ite missa* (dismissal) in favor of year-round use of the *Benedicamus domino*, eliminating the pre-Lenten and Lenten *Tract* in favor of year-round singing of the *Alleluia* (or eliminating the *Gradual* and *Alleluia/Tract* altogether in favor of a hymn), and suggesting or directing that the Aaronic benediction replace the customary blessing concluding the mass. Finally, although it was not a textual or even rubrical change per se, Luther emphasized preaching in both forms. In both the *Formula Missae* and *Deutsche Messe*, Luther insisted on preaching (or at least

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<sup>6</sup>LW 53:26.

<sup>7</sup>Friedrich Lochner, *Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), 10-11. Translated by Fred H. Lindemann, "The Mass Restored to Its Evangelical Form by Luther" in *American Lutheran*, volume 34, number 7, 9. Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author.

<sup>8</sup>For a detailed account of Luther's reform of the canon and his emphasis on the Words of Institution, one may see Bryan Spinks, *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* (Bramcote and Notts: Grove Books, 1982).

reading) from a book of sermons because, as he states in the earlier order, "properly speaking, the mass consists in using the Gospel and communing at the table of the Lord."<sup>9</sup> In another liturgical treatise, Luther went so far as to declare the following:

Now in order to correct these abuses, know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's word and prayer, no matter how briefly. . . . Therefore, when God's word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.<sup>10</sup>

Major liturgical differences, however, exist between the earlier *Formula Missae* and the later *Deutsche Messe*. While the *Formula Missae* retained much of the actual rite (text) of the historic western mass, in his *Deutsche Messe* Luther only makes use of the *Kyrie*, the series of readings, the Lord's Prayer and the *Verba testamenti*. Of the propers, the *Introit* was replaced with a hymn (or made an ordinary with a whole psalm in German set to the first tone); the *Gradual* and *Alleluia/Tract* were replaced with a German hymn; the *Offertorium* and *Communio* were omitted; and the *Collecta* and *Post-communio* were made ordinaries.<sup>11</sup> Of the ordinaries, the *Gloria in excelsis* is omitted altogether, and the Nicene Creed and *Sanctus* are replaced with hymnic versions.

#### *Luther's Intentions with the Deutsche Messe*

Even with these radical omissions and changes, Luther's purpose is not to replace the *Formula Missae* with the *Deutsche Messe*. Rather, he sees the *Deutsche Messe* acting as a temporary catechism or teaching mass in which the unlearned learn both

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<sup>9</sup>LW 53:25.

<sup>10</sup>"Concerning the Order of Public Worship," LW 53:11.

<sup>11</sup>That the first collect (*Collecta*) Luther gives is a conflation of two historic collects (and therefore nowhere to be found) suggests that it is intended less as an example and more as an ordinary much as the *Post-communio*. LW 53:72,84.

by what they hear and by what they sing.<sup>12</sup> This is unmistakably evident in two ways. First, Luther begins the *Deutsche Messe* by stating unequivocally:

In short, we prepare such orders not for those who already are Christians; for they need none of them. . . . But such orders are needed for those who are still becoming Christians or need to be strengthened, since a Christian does not need baptism, the word and the sacrament as a Christian—for all things are his—but as a sinner. They are essential especially for the immature and the young who must be trained and educated in the Scripture and God's word daily so that they may become familiar with the Bible, grounded, well versed, and skilled in it, ready to defend their faith and in due time to teach others and to increase the kingdom of Christ. . . . For this is the damnable thing about the popish services: that men made laws, works and merits out of them—to the detriment of faith—and did not use them to train the youth and common people in the Scriptures and in the word of God, but became so engrossed in them as to regard them as inherently useful and necessary for salvation. This is the [work of the] very devil. The ancients did not institute or order them to that intent.<sup>13</sup>

Following that preface, after lamenting the need for a catechism, Luther spends several pages developing a catechetical plan and incorporating that plan into the *Gottesdienst*, beginning with an order for catechism services set within matins and vespers and then setting up a catechetical form of the mass for greater teachability and retention. Throughout the description of this *Deutsche Messe*, Luther repeats its catechetical focus and then concludes with a reiteration of the need for teaching the unlearned and young.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>LW 53:62-63: "The first is the one in Latin which we published earlier under the title *Formula Missae*. It is not now my intention to abrogate or to change this service." One may also see LW 53:89.

<sup>13</sup>LW 53:62.

<sup>14</sup>LW 53:64-67, 68-69, 80; 89.

In short, Luther sees this *Deutsche Messe* as simply another cog in his catechetical plan.

Second, Luther makes it clear that he does not intend this form to survive, but supplies it only to address a pressing need.

In the first place, I would kindly and for God's sake request all those who see this order of service or desire to follow it: Do not make it a rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty *as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful*. For this is being published not as though we meant to lord it over anyone else, or to legislate for him, but *because of the widespread demand for German masses and services and the general dissatisfaction and offense that has been caused by the great variety of new masses*, for everyone makes his own order of service.<sup>15</sup>

What Luther desires as an eventual replacement for the *Deutsche Messe* is "a third kind of service" where "those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should . . . meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works."<sup>16</sup> Luther, then, designed the *Deutsche Messe* to serve until the truly evangelical order was established. So Luther writes:

*In the meanwhile* the two-above mentioned orders of service must suffice. And to train the young and to call and attract others to faith, I shall – besides preaching – help to further such public services for the people, *until Christians who earnestly love the word find each other and join together*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>LW 53:61 (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup>LW 53:63-64. Although no evidence can be found that Luther ever provided the third "truly evangelical order," it may be that something of that sort was the basis of the mass celebrated in his home during the years of his *Hauspostille* (circa 1530s). Fred Precht asserts that when "[Luther] became aware that such a procedure undermined the doctrine of the ministry and the church, he eschewed such gathering" ("Worship Resources," 111, n.8).

<sup>17</sup>LW 53:23-27 (emphasis added).

*Wilhelm Löhe's Critique of Deutsche Messe*

The liturgical result of this temporary catechetical and didactic *Hauptgottesdienst* is an unbalanced "word-heavy" service short on the psalmody of the propers and to which the Liturgy of the Eucharist appears to be an odd appendage. Despite Luther's self-caution toward sectarianism,<sup>18</sup> it also gives the impression that any pastor or bishop may determine that ". . . it is best to plan the services in the interest of the young and such of the unlearned as may happen to come."<sup>19</sup> This imbalance and implied permission to do whatever is best to meet the needs of the young and unlearned materializes because liturgy is driven by its secondary function (instructing the faith) rather than by its primary function—imparting the faith by the dominical gifts faith joyfully receives.<sup>20</sup>

That is the judgment of the foremost nineteenth-century Lutheran liturgical scholar, Wilhelm Löhe, who not only shared Luther's desire for catechesis for the young and unlearned, but was equal to him in catechetical scholarship. Löhe maintained that liturgy generally and the *Hauptgottesdienst* particularly are not primarily part of the instructional task. The liturgy, rather, is chiefly action—the action of God received by His children, and the active response of the faithful to their God's gifts and giving.

He [Löhe] wants liturgy for its own sake, and the Lord's Service as a genuine ceremony and not merely as an instructional hour. Löhe wants ceremony in the profoundest sense—as devotion. . . . So through his *Agende* and all of his liturgical recommendations, he desires to bring to the understanding of worship an ever increasing

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<sup>18</sup>LW53:64: "For if I should try to make it up out of my own need, it might turn into a sect."

<sup>19</sup>LW53:89.

<sup>20</sup>In *What is Liturgical Theology?* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) David Fagerberg describes more fully what I term the primary and secondary functions of liturgy. One may see especially his critique of Geoffrey Wainright's *Doxology* and Peter Brunner's *Worship in the Name of Jesus* on pages 132-142.

development of ceremony so that ceremony is experienced both in deed and in truth.<sup>21</sup>

According to this understanding of liturgy as faith, whose true celebration and adoration is to receive and rejoice in God's gifts, Löhe stood with Luther. "For Löhe, as for Luther, the liturgy is a holy drama full of life and movement; worship is a holy dialogue between the Triune God and the congregation."<sup>22</sup> Yet precisely because of that understanding, Löhe also stood against what he saw as Luther's misuse of the liturgy to fulfill pedagogical needs.

Secondly, Löhe saw in the *Deutsche Messe*—and other early Lutheran liturgical orders—an air of improvisation.

Löhe sought to be honest in his historical assessment of Lutheranism and was compelled to criticize a certain direction which the Reformation took in liturgical matters, although he consistently defended the Reformation itself as a necessary reform and purification of the church's life and doctrine. . . . His criticism of the reformers in the area of liturgical life grew out of his conviction that they lacked both historical knowledge and insight into the larger liturgical tradition. This resulted in a tendency toward both radicalism and superficiality. Positive liturgical principles were lacking and the consequence was liturgical improvisation.<sup>23</sup>

For this reason, the well-founded need for correcting doctrinal and liturgical aberrations (for example, the lack of congregational participation), coupled with a lack of liturgical historical knowledge, oftentimes led unintentionally to a liturgical and (consequently) doctrinal correction where undue emphasis was placed on the Liturgy of the Word—and the sermon particularly—while congregational participation, in

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<sup>21</sup>Hans Kressel, *Wilhelm Löhe als Liturg und Liturgiker* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1952), 82-83.

<sup>22</sup>Kressel, *Löhe*, 83.

<sup>23</sup>Hans Goebel, "Wilhelm Loehe and The Quest for Liturgical Principle," *Una Sancta* 22 (1965): 22-23.

both the dialogue of faith and the catholic continuity of worship, was (again, unintentionally) de-emphasized by rhymed ordinaries, an elimination of proper chants, and a dearth of the traditional versicles with their responses (that is, the salutation, *Benedicamus*, and *Pax Domini*, among others). The change of the primary function of the *Hauptgottesdienst* from the imparting and receptivity of faith to indoctrination in the faith, the deficiency in historical continuity, and the lack of positive liturgical principles—these are the three elements that inform Wilhelm Löhe's criticism of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*, which culminates in this scathing rebuke:

Even though Luther exceeded the boundaries of the reformational approach to liturgy with his *Deutsche Messe* (1526), and set forth on a path other than the one on which he had embarked with the genuinely reformational approach of 1523 [*Formula Missae*], his example did not prove decisive to the extent that one would have followed him wherever he went. At the very least, in a very large number of regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) one refrained from discarding anything wherein a blessing might be found. Notably, there existed too great a dearth in liturgical education and that particular insight which was able to scan the entire liturgical field (*des großen liturgischen Ganzen*) of the early church, even among the earliest Lutherans, so that even then many an irreproachable and splendid treasure inherited from ancient times might have been cast aside. For my part, I find nowhere the application of a Lutheran principle in the Lutheran agendas—save that of negative dogmatism.<sup>24</sup>

With such a rebuke, the lines are clearly drawn—as well as the issues that inform those lines—between the two different streams of Lutheran liturgical theory and practice that made their way into the first liturgies of the Missouri Synod. Clearly on the one side stands Wilhelm Löhe, not only because he defined the differences, but also because he produced the

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<sup>24</sup>Wilhelm Löhe, *Der evangelische Geistliche* (volume 2) in *Gesammelte Werke*, III/2, 251 (author's translation with gratitude to Dr. Gerald S. Krispin).

1844/1853 *Agende*, with which the majority of the founding pastors and congregations of the Missouri Synod were familiar. Löhe's *Agende* determinedly landed on the side of Luther's *Formula Missae*, although not slavishly so. On the other side stands the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*, which followed a *Hauptgottesdienst* order very much in line with the *Deutsche Messe*, but again not slavishly so. With its adoption, the Synod in convention assembled effectively outlawed all other *Agenden* (most notably Löhe's *Agende*). Hence the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende* necessarily dominated the Synod's liturgical practice throughout its German period and, in doing so, seared itself into the collective liturgical memory of all synodical pastors and congregations.

#### *Löhe's Corrective Principles in the 1844 Agende*

Löhe describes the elements he uses to judge the *Deutsche Messe* in the *Agende*. These comprise the elements of his "positive principle" for Lutheran liturgy. The question his positive liturgical principle seeks to answer may be posed in this manner: does the Evangelical-Lutheran confession and doctrine determine or establish certain criterion that constitute not simply what is liturgically inappropriate or heretical, but what is liturgically necessary – criterion not only by which liturgy can be judged, but that also define what theologically and liturgically sound Lutheran liturgy is and of what it consists? Wilhelm Löhe's affirmative answer rests both in Lutheranism's *Hauptartikel* of the doctrine of forensic justification and the gospel, and in that justification and gospel word grounded christologically in the incarnation of the Son of God, the benefits of which are concretely bestowed upon the believer. In his *Agende* and other liturgical writings, we can identify at least three outstanding elements to this positive principle for Lutheran liturgy.

One element that Löhe enunciates is that liturgy is not only intimately connected with the Church's confession and doctrine, but also the central action of the faithful, what Hans Kressel calls a "holy dialogue" (*heiliges Wechselgespräch*). Through this holy dialogue, the grace of God is both given and received, and

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consequently "the order of salvation" (*die Ordnung des Heils*) moves from being a theoretical construct to being real and concrete.

A careful examination of this *Agenda* will convince them that it is built entirely on the order of worship (*Ordnung des Gottesdienst*). In worship, the congregation feels herself near her Lord. There, in closest proximity to the Bridegroom, she lives a life of heaven on earth (*ein himmlisches Erdenleben*)—or the earthly life in heaven (*ein irdisches Himmelsleben*). Worship is the beautiful flowering of all temporal life. The *Agenda* should be the expression and depiction of the inner unity and harmony of this wonderful life—not an abstract but concrete aesthetic of the church of God. In this inner life and in the worship, the congregation is like rocks in the sea of word and sacrament. As the sea flows over the rocks, the holy shape of the liturgy flows over its focus of word and sacrament. As the sea breaks on the rocks (both to erode and to roar—as caused by the rocks), so also the liturgical life is not arbitrary but its waves move in concentration around the inner revolution of the spiritual life; [that is] it revolves around its focus of word and sacrament. Word and sacrament determine the order of salvation (*Ordnung des Heils*), and this [in turn] determines the order of worship (*Ordnung des Gottesdienst*). Just as spiritual life without the order of salvation is inconceivable, so also worship is inconceivable without an order, without a well-written progress of salutary thanksgiving (*schriftgemäßen Fortschritt heilsamer Gedanken*). This is especially true of the congregation's Sunday and feast communion services (*Hauptgottesdiensten*).<sup>25</sup>

In his *Hauptgottesdienst*, this element of the concrete holy dialogue—the order of salvation in action—is demonstrated by an order of service that is not only balanced but also has within itself a dynamic and upward movement. The summit of "the

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<sup>25</sup>Löhe, "Vorwort zur ersten Auflage" of *Löhe's Agende* (1844) in *GW VII/1*, 12-13 (emphasis in original).

word" is clearly elevated in the "Liturgy of the Word" as the gospel and preaching. The former is not simply another reading in a series of readings, but surrounded by the simple, yet profound, dialogue between celebrant and faithful ("The Lord be with you/ And with your spirit," "The holy Evangelist writes . . . /Glory be to You, O Lord" before and "Praise to be You, O Christ" after), while the latter also is surrounded with an uncomplicated and grace-filled dialogue ("The Pastor . . . greets . . . the congregation with an apostolic greeting . . .," "[The pastor] concludes the sermon with the *Gloria Patri* or a similar doxology [Lobpreisung] so that the congregation can say its fitting 'Amen'").<sup>26</sup> Before and after this summit is a crescendo (introit, *Kyrie*, *Gloria in excelsis*, collect, epistle, hymn) and decrescendo (prayer) with the repeating of the faith (creed) as a response or dialogical statement between the Gospel reading and sermon. The summit of "the sacrament" also is elevated at least to the level of "the word" by the liturgy employed. The climax is the Words of Institution, followed by the distribution, which also are couched within a "holy dialogue" between celebrant and faithful. The crescendo to the *Verba* is the preface, which contains a smaller and larger dialogue (the prefatory versicles, and the proper preface followed by the *Sanctus*). The decrescendo is a song of thanksgiving (*Nunc Dimittis*), a prayer of thanksgiving (preceded by the customary salutation), and the blessing (also preceded by the customary salutation and *Benedicamus*). As with the Liturgy of the Word, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist a responsory (the *Agnus Dei*) connects the dual summit of *Verba* and distribution, with the *Pater noster* also added as a kind of "priestly" response followed immediately by the dialogical *Pax domini*.<sup>27</sup> The summit itself is set apart by a

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<sup>26</sup>*Agende* (1844), 21-22, 23. The latter rubric concerning the *Gloria Patri* after the sermon is from the second edition (*Agende* [1853], 37).

<sup>27</sup>As Löhe points out, the placement of the Lord's Prayer after the *Verba testamenti* is not only the more ancient practice, but also the one followed by a number of sixteenth-century Lutheran *Kirchenordnungen*, both before and after Luther's innovative change in the *Deutsche Messe* (one may compare *Agende* [1853], 47.) Whether done before or after the *Verba testamenti*, until recent times the Lord's Prayer in the Lutheran *Hauptgottesdienst* was prayed only by the pastor with the people saying or singing only the "Amen."

rubric purposefully reminiscent of Luther's 1523 *Formula Missae*: "[After the *Sanctus*], there shall be a brief but deep silence."<sup>28</sup> In the second edition of 1853, the primacy of the *Verba testamenti* is further confirmed with this rubric:

During the distribution, if either the bread or wine run out and more must be used, then the new supply must be consecrated aloud (that is, bread when the bread is lacking, or wine when the wine is lacking). The organ and singing must stop, and everything is celebrated as it was during the original consecration. For this consecration, the same part of the Words of Institution is used which applies to the element that is to be consecrated.<sup>29</sup>

Nowhere to be found, then, are the jarring and "conversationally" one-sided movements from hymn to hymn, or the complete absence of simple but theologically poignant dialogues; neither also the long catechesis on the Lord's Prayer nor the break in the *Verba* — all of which Luther provides for in the *Deutsche Messe*. They not only eliminate or break the dialogical flow, but also make for a tedious mass.

In the forward to the *Agende (1844)*, Löhe forthrightly asserts historical continuity as a second element to his "positive liturgical principle." Historical continuity in the liturgy is built not only on what is doctrinally sound according to the Scriptures and Confessions, but also on that doctrinal soundness carried through the catholic liturgical tradition. For this reason, Löhe is not satisfied simply to state, "I have . . . refrained from using anything in this Liturgy which is not already found in one or the other of the many old Lutheran Orders."<sup>30</sup> Before that, he is compelled to declare the following:

The Lutheran liturgy certainly emerged from the Roman. Yet the entire Lutheran Church is not a new building but

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<sup>28</sup>*Agende (1844)*, 29. One may see LW 53:28.

<sup>29</sup>*Agende (1853)*, 52 (author's translation with gratitude to the Rev. Charles J. Evanson).

<sup>30</sup>*Agende (1844)* in GW VII/1, 12 (translated from *Liturgy for Christian Congregations*, xi).

the old [building], purified and stripped of superfluities and distortions. For three hundred years, the [Lutheran] Church advanced no new doctrines, but quite the contrary, removed novelties from the ancient doctrines. In the same way, she has not set off on a new course in the liturgy, but after removing harmful innovations has retained the unadulterated old [forms]. Thus it happens that in the communion service, for example, we have with the Roman Church the selfsame constituent elements. And so Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession can maintain that "no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the mass" [and] "without boasting, it is manifest that the mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents." 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. (And as one of her members, I will gladly endure such polemic!) 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>31</sup>

This historical or catholic element to liturgy is carried out in no clearer way than in the retention of many of the western rite propers and ordinaries, "which we have received through the channels of Rome."<sup>32</sup> Not only are the propers provided for, they are printed in the *Agende* itself so that all can see and make use of the historic introits, collects, and readings. Following the latter sixteenth-century Lutheran Church Orders (*Kirchenordnungen*), Löhe makes the preparatory priestly confession of sins (*Confiteor*) an ordinary for the laity, provides a general prayer prayed from the altar, and replaces the proper *Offertorium*, *Communio*, and *Post-communio* with ordinaries (the "Create in me," the *Nunc dimittis*, and one of four post-communion collects, respectively). He also dispenses with the

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<sup>31</sup>*Agende* (1844) 10-11.

<sup>32</sup>*Agende* (1844) 12 (translated in *Liturgy for Christian Congregations*, xi).

gradual and *Alleluia/Tract* (although the word "halleluja" is always to be sung) in favor of the "the congregation's chorale whose content is suited to the season and circumstances or the text." However, the rubric does permit that "in cities or elsewhere as circumstances allow and one desires, an ancient gradual, sequence or prose can be sung before the alleluia verse on feasts. But, in any case, it must not displace the congregational hymn (*Choralgesang*)."<sup>33</sup> Finally, Löhe provides for the use of the shorter liturgical dialogue of versicle with response (particularly the salutation), which *Deutsche Messe* omits, and even allows for more frequent use than Luther does in his *Formula Missae*.

A third element that Wilhelm Löhe develops and employs in his positive principle might be termed the "christological" or "sacramental" element. For Löhe, true liturgy in the Evangelical-Lutheran confession culminates in receiving salvation in Christ not solely or exclusively or even primarily in the preaching, but in the Testament of His body and blood. For this reason, Löhe argues that the sacrament of the altar is both the kernel and foundation—the culmination, if you will—of a decidedly Lutheran *Hauptgottesdienst*.

The chief service (*Hauptgottesdienst*) of the church always has as its purpose the communion or the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is certainly the core. Whatever proceeds or follows stands in relation to it. This is how it is not only in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Churches, but also in the Evangelical[-Lutheran] Church. A chief service without the Lord's Supper is unacceptable. It is like a broken column or like a flower which has lost its bloom. . . . A liturgy whose order of worship is neither generally nor specifically centered on the holy supper is merely something incidental, lacking of thought—a pile of bones properly arranged but no body in an organic union; flesh without a skeleton, stones without a building. . . . [So] if we want to understand the Evangelical[-Lutheran] mass correctly, we must necessarily compare it to the Roman as

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<sup>33</sup>*Agende* (1844), 21.

it is now and as it was before the time of the Reformation. For both employed the liturgy of Gregory the Great. So [the Lutheran mass] is nothing other than the Roman mass purified according to the form of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>34</sup>

In another place, Löhe makes the same point when speaking of "sacred space":

This is now the chief question: In the Lutheran Church, which is the primary and most important location—the altar or the pulpit? This question is easily answered. In the Lutheran service, not the sermon but the holy sacrament is the greatest ceremony. The sermon leads to the holy meal since it directs the Christians to a fervent mystical union with their Christ. . . . Therefore, the altar is and remains the most important location both for the Lutheran church building and for the appointments of our worship edifice since it gives purpose to the entire holy room. For this reason, even the layout of the Lutheran Church is wholly patterned after the older houses of God.<sup>35</sup>

These and other statements by Löhe lead to Hans Kressel's claim that Löhe's emphasis on the historical understanding of a sacramental liturgy is his primary liturgical contribution.

[Löhe] did not get stuck in the doorway of confession and penance, as many early Lutherans did. Rather, he stepped into the resounding, bright choir (*in den hellen, lichten Chor*) toward the resplendent joy of the eucharist—a complete eucharist in the Lutheran service. Eucharist, as early Christianity understood [it, was] nothing other than *ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει* ("with gladness"; Acts 2.46); that is, the Lord's Supper celebrated with great, overflowing joy. Eucharist, as Luther boasted about the true, Christian mass: "God be praised" (WA 38.247.10 [LW 38:208]). Eucharist, as Johann Scriver implores: "Let Your Supper be my heaven on

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<sup>34</sup>Wilhelm Löhe, *Sammlung liturgischer Formulare der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: Drittes Heft: Ordnung der Communio oder der evangelischen Messe*, 3 in GW VII/2, 698-699.

<sup>35</sup>Wilhelm Löhe, *Der evangelische Geistliche* (volume 2) in GW III/2, 243-244.

on earth!" Eucharist, as a Russian theologian in our time writes (following in Löhe's footsteps): "Le ciel sur la terre" ("Heaven on earth"). Indeed, a eucharistic worship: "Paradise on earth." There is no other Lutheran theologian in modern times (and not only in modern times) who has presented to us anew the sacrament of the altar as eucharist so much as has Löhe.<sup>36</sup>

This christological or sacramental element of Lutheran liturgy is of course evident in Löhe's *Agende* (1844). He devotes a significant portion of the forward to an almost poetic, yet careful explanation of the movement and drama in the communion service. Near the beginning of this description, he describes the place of the sacrament within the *Hauptgottesdienst*.

I would compare the rationale (*Gedankengang*) of the liturgy of the chief service (*Hauptgottesdienst*) with a two-peaked mountain (something like Horeb and Sinai) where one peak is lower than the other. The first [lower] peak is the sermon, and the second is the sacrament of the altar—without which I myself cannot conceive of a complete service on earth. In the chief service, one is always ascending until he reaches the table of the Lord. Here one finds nothing higher than what he has in heaven itself. Yet a suitable expression for this inward longing can be found in the *Nunc dimittis*.<sup>37</sup>

After detailing the movement in the parts that lead to the first peak and then from there to the greater part or higher peak, Löhe concludes the explanation with this brief summary:

From faith in faith, man has gone from one stage to another [until] he has come to the most blessed experience. Because he can ascend no higher except by death (*Nunc dimittis*), he descends to the familiar conclusion of the service seeking the transition to the earthly vocation God has imposed on each as preparation for heaven.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Kressel, *Löhe*, 226-227.

<sup>37</sup>*Agende* (1844), in GW VII/1, 13.

<sup>38</sup>*Agende* (1844), in GW VII/1, 13.

That the sacrament of the altar is the climax and peak of the *Hauptgottesdienst* in *Agende* (1844) is also evident in the rubric, rite, and ceremony surrounding the sermon, the consecration, and the distribution. In laying out the rubrics for the sermon, Löhe deliberately reduces an elaborate pulpit ceremony that had built up during the time of Pietism and Rationalism. The rubrics direct the pastor, immediately after the creed, simply to greet the congregation with the apostolic greeting and then to preach the sermon. In addition, he shall preach on the Gospel reading "so that it need not be read yet again from the pulpit since it was first sung or read at the altar before the creed." Similarly, after the sermon the pastor simply bids the congregation to pray, not with a lengthy or drawn out exhortation, but "with a few words."<sup>39</sup> With these rubrics, Löhe's puts into practice his understanding that the altar takes center stage in Lutheran liturgy and liturgical theology.

For this reason, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is embellished in a way that purposefully hearkens back to the early Lutheran Church Orders. Löhe includes the proper prefaces because "the retained and commoner form of the preface includes, as it ought, more of thanksgiving, and the thanksgiving is thus brought into closer relation with the sacrament, for which the thanks are really to be given."<sup>40</sup> Additionally, in the fuller second edition of 1853, Löhe provides not only communion preparation prayers for the pastor, but also this more elaborate distribution formula: (1) the pastor says a prayer aloud for all to receive the sacrament worthily; (2) turning to the communicants with the paten in hand, he speaks the *Confessio corporis Christi*; (3) he distributes the body of Christ repeating Christ's words from the first part of the Words of Institution; (4) he then takes the chalice and holding before the communicants says the *Confessio sanguinis Christi*; (5) he distributes the blood of Christ repeating Christ's words from the second part of the Words of Institution; (6) and he dismisses the communicants with a

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<sup>39</sup>*Agende* (1844), 23.

<sup>40</sup>*Agende* (1853), 56 in GW VII/1, 77. Translated by F. C. Longaker in *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith*, 57.

variation of the post-sumtio prayer in the *Missale Romanum*.<sup>41</sup> The ceremony is further heightened by the rubrically encouraged "amen" by the communicants following each of the six parts. Besides its elaborate yet devotional ritual, what stands out in the distribution ceremony is the innovative *Confessio corporis et sanguinis*. Löhe incorporated this from the 1524 Wittenberg *Ordnung christlicher Messe* compiled by Johannes Bugenhagen, which he readily admits is nowhere to be found in other Lutheran agendas or in the Roman mass. Yet Löhe defends its inclusion, and at the same time provides one more piece of evidence for his understanding of the sacrament as liturgical climax:

At a time like ours when the conscience for confessional distinction is so dull and when indifferentism and carelessness, under the guise of charity, seek to establish themselves in regard to the words of Christ especially in the Lord's Supper, a *Confessio corporis et sanguinis* seems to be entirely appropriate and even required. So I have daringly followed Bugenhagen and the Wittenberg congregation and inserted them in this place. Should they seem superfluous after the consecration and elevation, then they can simply be omitted. Bugenhagen certainly did not consider them wrong. Yet we do not require [others] to pay homage to false dogma.<sup>42</sup>

Löhe's most profound indication of the sacramental "positive liturgical principle," however, is his refusal to include an admonition to communion (*Abendmahlsvermahnung*) within the chief service. This omission may seem especially striking since Löhe, in the 1853 edition, does not hesitate to list immediately after the benediction the placement of the admonition in several prominent sixteenth-century church orders.<sup>43</sup> To be sure, he provides a communion admonition in a section immediately following the communion service. But the rubric he uses to preface the seemingly original admonition is as much a

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<sup>41</sup>*Agende (1853)*, 49 in *GW VII/1*, 70; 50 in *GW VII/1*, 71.

<sup>42</sup>*Agende (1853)*, 49 in *GW VII/1*, 70.

<sup>43</sup>*Agende (1853)*, 55 in *GW VII/1*, 76.

testimony to and attestation of his sacramental liturgical principle as it is catechetical: "After the sermon, the service is celebrated in full to the end of the communion. If the complete communion liturgy cannot be celebrated because there are no communicants, then the service must be cut short at the very point where it should climax—in the holy sacrament."<sup>44</sup>

After the rubric, Löhe gives his "Example of an Admonition," where he leaves no doubt in the minds of the hearers that the sacrament is the culmination of the *Hauptgottesdienst* and that the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not only to be celebrated but communion is to be received by all eligible parishioners. With a proper division and balance of law and gospel, Löhe both exposes the sin of refusing to heed the Lord's gracious invitation and implores the parishioners to consider and receive the grace from the fulness of Christ given in the sacrament. The conclusion of his admonition also serves well to summarize the sacramental aspect of Löhe's positive liturgical principle:

He is rightly prepared who time and again hungers for this food and thirsts for this drink. And the more he communes at Jesus' table, the better he knows that life itself (*das ganze Leben*) should be nothing other than a perpetual preparation for the marriage feast of the Lamb in this life and the next (*Abendmahle des Lammes hier und dort*)—a coming and going and returning to His sanctuary; and that this passage refers to frequent communion: "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You! Selah."<sup>45</sup>

#### *The Result: A Liturgy that Endures*

In defining and applying the threefold elements of liturgy as a holy dialogue, liturgy within catholic continuity and context, and liturgy where the sacrament of the altar is both core and climax, the result is a *Hauptgottesdienst* similar to Luther's *Formula Missae*. This should not be surprising because in his

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<sup>44</sup>*Agende* (1844), 35.

<sup>45</sup>*Agende* (1844), 36.

*Formula Missae* Luther is deliberately conservative in the "shape" or "form" of this service, not simply because he does not wish to disrupt the worship of the people or to head off "fickle and fastidious spirit," but more so because he primarily understands that "the mass, that is, the communion of bread and wine, is a rite divinely instituted by Christ Himself." That rite has been retained and celebrated since the time of the apostles with many scriptural (and therefore commendable) additions such as the proper psalmodic chants, the series of readings, and the "unobjectionable" Sunday ordinaries, all of which "testify to ancient purity."<sup>46</sup> One could say, then, that with his *Agende* (1844), Wilhelm Löhe merely fleshes out the bare outline given by Martin Luther in the *Formula Missae*, providing the traditional propers and ordinaries and excising the innovations and accretions as Luther did (with the exception of restoring the proper prefaces, which then necessitated reordering preface and sanctus).

At the same time, what Löhe adds is a thoroughly researched, dogmatically grounded, historically conscious, and liturgically cogent positive argument or rationale for why Lutheran liturgy *must* include certain portions or elements in her chief service. Such a rationale, as well as the *Agende* that is its fruit, greatly influenced the liturgical studies of the theologians and scholars who prepared the 1888 Common Service.<sup>47</sup> That service was compiled under the following rule, which clearly incorporates a greater part of the historical continuity element in Löhe's positive liturgical principle and, in so doing, implicitly includes the other two elements. "The Rule which shall decide all questions arising in its preparation shall be: the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century, and when there is not an entire agreement among them the consent of the largest number of the greatest weight."<sup>48</sup>

Resulting from this rule and Löhe's careful explanations is an English version of the *Hauptgottesdienst* (the 1888 Common

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<sup>46</sup>LW 53:20-21.

<sup>47</sup>Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 153.

<sup>48</sup>Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 183.

Service) that is hardly distinguishable from "Ordnung der Gottesdienst: Die Communion oder der Hauptgottesdienst" in *Agende* (1844). Within less than a quarter century, this Common Service was adopted with very few variations by every major Lutheran church body in America. It came into the Missouri Synod when the English Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States joined the German Missouri Synod in 1911. In 1912, the Missouri Synod published an expanded edition of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, making the Common Service an official communion service.<sup>49</sup> That English communion service, so dependent on *Agende* (1844), is certainly within the *Formula Missae* liturgical stream and survives in the Missouri Synod to this day in the form of "The Order of Holy Communion" in *The Lutheran Hymnal* and "Divine Service I" in *Lutheran Worship*.<sup>50</sup> But standing alongside (or even within) those current hymnals are "Divine Service III" in *Lutheran Worship* and "Divine Service" in *Hymnal Supplement 98*, communion liturgies that, implicitly or overtly, trace their origin to Luther's *Deutsche Messe* as it was mediated through the first official Missouri Synod Communion Service in the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende*.

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<sup>49</sup>The English Synod had been using the Common Service since the publication of the second edition *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* ("Pittsburgh Hymnal") in 1891. One may see Fred Precht, "Worship Resources," 97-99.

<sup>50</sup>Although the compilers of "Holy Communion" of *Lutheran Book of Worship*, and its step-sister, "Divine Service II" in *Lutheran Worship*, trace its heritage to the 1888 Common Service, it is this writer's opinion that the differences in propers and ordinaries (in terms of what is retained or omitted, and what is changed or new) are enough to constitute yet a third stream in the history of American Lutheran liturgy.