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Walther's Editorial in the First Issue of *Der Lutheraner*

Trans. by ALEX W. C. GUEBERT

The German population of the western part of America is evidently growing day by day. Consequently there is also an increasing number of those who profess the same faith that Luther once proclaimed. Yet the members of no other church body are so forlorn as those of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Even those who still call themselves Lutheran live so far apart and are in such poor circumstances that in many places they are in no position to organize a congregation and call a Lutheran pastor who can minister to their spiritual needs. The German Lutherans, therefore, are sorely tempted to forsake the faith of their fathers either by total disregard for the church, divine worship, etc., or by seeking to satisfy their spiritual needs in other church organizations in their vicinity. Our dear fellow Lutherans in this section of our new fatherland therefore indeed need encouragement to remain loyal to their faith. They need to be warned against the dangers of apostasy that are threatening so many of them. They need weapons to defend themselves against those who seek to make them waver in their conviction that the faith which they learned in their youth from their Catechism is correct. They need the comfort that the church with which they are affiliated has not disappeared and that, therefore, they have no reason to seek refuge in another church organization.

This need, of which no doubt many others are aware also, and the conviction

that it is our duty to give an account to our fellow citizens about what our church believes and teaches and about the principles according to which we operate—these considerations have led the undersigned, after consulting with several fellow pastors and brethren in the faith in Missouri and Illinois, to publish a church periodical under the name printed at the head of this page. The purpose of the periodical shall be: (1) to acquaint the reader with the teaching, the treasures, and the history of the Lutheran Church; (2) to offer proof that this church is not one of the many sects in Christendom, that it is not a new, but the old true church of Jesus Christ on earth, that it, therefore, has by no means died out, yea, cannot die out, according to Christ's promise "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"; (3) to show how a true Lutheran can have true faith, live a Christian life, suffer patiently, and die a blessed death; (4) to point out, refute, and warn against current false, seductive doctrines, and especially to unmask those who falsely call themselves Lutherans, who under this name spread misbelief, unbelief, and religious fanaticism and arouse hurtful prejudices against our church in the minds of non-Lutherans.

The previous paragraph, no doubt, will lead some people either to suppose that we shall not be able to reach the goal we have set for ourselves or to be afraid that our periodical will breathe the spirit of intolerance and so will entertain and nourish

hate against people in other denominations. In answer to the first misgiving we can only say the following: We realize more keenly than anyone else to what extent we lack the ability to fulfill the big obligation of an editor of a Christian periodical. At the same time we know that in divine things we do not need great erudition and eloquence to serve our brethren but a true and living conviction of saving truth and a simple witness to it. Furthermore, in this periodical we intend to quote passages from the writings of great teachers of our church, especially from those of Luther. We believe these quotations will make our periodical so valuable that the reader will be ready to accept our own contribution at least as a slight bonus. To the second misgiving expressed above we offer this answer: The fear concerning intolerance and hate will

no doubt disappear as soon as the reader has had the opportunity to read several issues carefully and without prejudice. For a considerable time we ourselves were caught in a number of errors, but God had patience with us and with much forbearance led us into the way of truth. Mindful of this experience, we will also exercise patience with our erring neighbors and will by the grace of God avoid all sinful judging and condemning. We will not direct our attacks against the erring person, but against the error he is espousing. Nor will we give the impression that we are the only ones who are true Lutherans and possess the truth. Our chief concern will be to testify that God has done great things for us and has brought us to a living knowledge of the only truth that can save.

St. Louis, Mo., August, 1844.

C. F. W. WALTHER