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## ABOUT THE NAME "LUTHERAN"

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**C.F.W. Walther** *Der Lutheraner*, Volume 1, Nos. 1–4 (1 September – 13 October 1844)

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### *Editorial Introduction*

"Von dem Namen 'Lutheraner'" was published serially across four issues of *Der Lutheraner* in 1844 — the very first year of that periodical's existence — this article represents C.F.W. Walther's comprehensive defense of Lutheran ecclesiastical identity against both external critics and internal self-doubt among the German immigrant communities of Missouri and the Upper Mississippi Valley. It was a significant theological statement in the annals of American Lutheranism and continues to address ongoing criticism made by those outside of Lutheranism.

The article's historical context is important. *Der Lutheraner* was established by Walther in 1844 as the official publication of the nascent Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, itself formally organized only four years later (1847). In 1844, with thousands of German Lutheran refugees still arriving from persecution in their homeland, Walther recognized an urgent need to articulate why these believers should maintain Lutheran identity in a pluralistic American environment.

This article appeared in the very first number of the periodical Walther had founded in St. Louis, Missouri, to serve the scattered German Lutheran communities of the American interior. Written without a byline but universally attributed to Walther himself, the article launched the new journal with a work of confessional self-definition: a systematic defense of the Lutheran name against the twin accusations of sectarianism and party spirit. Walther's driving purpose was to demonstrate that the name "Lutheran," rightly understood, carried no schismatic implication whatsoever, but was instead a banner for the ancient, apostolic Gospel that Luther had recovered from Scripture and restored to the Church.

The article unfolds in four installments, each addressing a distinct objection to Lutheran self-identification. Its argument formed the theological foundation upon which Walther would build the Missouri Synod, formally organized three years later in 1847.

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## Part I — A. Is It Not Wrong to Call Ourselves by That Name?

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(Issue No. 1, 1 September 1844)

We did not shrink from giving our paper the title *Der Lutheraner*. We therefore consider it our duty to answer immediately anyone who might ask what this name means and why we wish to bear it.

We know very well that from the very beginning many have taken offense that the Lutheran Church is named after Luther — after a man.

"What?" they cry out, "does this not clearly show that this church cannot be the true church of Christ but must instead be the work of a man, a sect?" "Hey," they say, "you Lutherans, read what St. Paul says about such human names. In 1 Corinthians 1 and 3 it reads: 'It has been reported to me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: one of you says, "I belong to Paul"; another, "I belong to Apollos"; another, "I belong to Cephas"; still another, "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?' ... Do you hear, you Lutherans? Are you not doing exactly what the holy apostle rebukes in the Corinthians when you call yourselves Lutheran? You always insist that one must follow the letter of Scripture precisely — why do you not do so here?"

There are not a few upright Lutherans who become quite embarrassed when opponents throw this objection at them. Yet however plausible the charge may appear, it will soon prove entirely groundless if we examine the matter a little more closely.

First, it is a mistake to believe that the Lutherans themselves gave their church this name. History tells us rather that their enemies first called them "Lutherans" in order to insult them. Dr. Eck, who held the famous disputation with Luther in Leipzig, was the first to call those who held to Luther's teaching "Lutherans."

How Luther himself felt about this we see clearly in a writing published in 1522, *An Exhortation to Beware of Insurrection*, in which he says among other things:

"I ask that people would leave my name silent and not call themselves Lutheran but Christian. What is Luther? The doctrine is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone. St. Paul in 1 Cor. 3:4-5 would not suffer that Christians should call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, a poor stinking bag of maggots, come to have the children of Christ named

with my unholy name? Not so, dear friends! Let us extinguish all party names and be called Christians, whose doctrine we have. The papists rightly have a party name because they are not satisfied with Christ's doctrine and name but also want to be papal, since their master is the pope. I am and will be no one's master. I and the whole congregation have the one common teaching of Christ, who alone is our Master (Matt. 23:8)."

This judgment of Luther is as clear as the sun: he earnestly did not want the church named after him, much less out of ambition. One must not imagine that it is wrong in itself when Christians let themselves be named after a man. This follows incontrovertibly from the fact that God Himself named the Old Testament church after a man — the Israelites. Did not Christ also say of Nathanael, "Behold, a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile"? And what was Israel? A man.

It is therefore clear that everything depends on the sense in which the children of God name themselves after a man; only in that sense can sin be found. In what sense and for what reason did the Corinthians first call themselves Pauline, Apollonian, Cephasian, or Christian? As we read, they wanted thereby to separate themselves from one another.

Although Paul, Apollos, and Peter (or Cephas) taught one and the same thing, the Corinthian Christians, if they accepted one, rejected the other; through those names they broke with one another and created parties. The sin Paul rebukes therefore did not consist in the fact that they named themselves after men, but that they wanted thereby to create divisions among those who held one and the same orthodox doctrine. That is why the apostle himself rejects even the name "Christian" when it is used as a party name — although this last name is not taken from a man but from Christ, the Son of God Himself.

True Lutherans have never named themselves after Luther in that condemnable sense. With this name they have never wanted to separate themselves from any other orthodox teacher. As Lutherans they confess themselves to an Athanasius and to all pure preachers of the Gospel in all times and lands just as much as to Luther. Luther himself was far from wanting to be the only true teacher.

Luther writes publicly of his contemporary, the Württemberg theologian Brenz:

"I think so highly of your writings that my books utterly stink when I compare them with yours and those of your like; and I do not flatter you here; I invent nothing, nor do I say anything disparaging; so shall I not be deceived in my judgment, for I praise not Brenz but the Spirit who is in you, who is much friendlier, more loving, and more peaceful than my spirit."

Such language is certainly not that of a man who wants to be the head of a sect; such language is that of a Luther who wanted to be nothing more than a witness to the truth.

We therefore do not call ourselves Lutheran after him in the same way we call ourselves Christian after Christ; we are not so called because we believe in Luther. However highly we esteem this great instrument of God, in our church not a single word on matters of faith is accepted simply because Luther said it, but only because and when it can be clearly proved from the written Word of God.

We regard him as no apostle or prophet; we know that, although highly enlightened, he was just as subject to error and sin as other men. He is not the head of our church, not our pope. Whoever accepts everything in blind faith simply because Luther taught it is as far from true Lutheranism as earth is from heaven and night from day.

Therefore Luther wrote in 1530 to Melancthon, when the latter was at the Diet of Augsburg:

"It displeases me in your letter that you write that you have followed me as the head in this matter for the sake of my reputation. I will be nothing, I command nothing, I will not be called author. And even if a convenient interpretation could be found for the word, I will not have it. If the matter is not equally yours and concerns you as much as me, one should not say that it is mine."

Just as Luther so vigorously rejects such improper esteem in the church, so our church has never granted it to him; for right at the beginning of the Formula of Concord, which is one of the most important public confessions of the orthodox Lutherans, it says:

"We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and standard according to which all doctrines and all teachers should be judged and evaluated are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone. Other writings of the old and new teachers, whatever their names may be, should not be held equal to Holy Scripture, but all together and each one should be subjected to it, and should be received only as witnesses, showing in what manner and in which places after the time of the apostles such doctrine of the apostles and prophets was preserved."

So finally the question arises: do we call ourselves Lutheran in order to show that we cling to a new doctrine which Luther first brought forth 300 years ago, and that we want to belong to a new church instituted by him? Far be it! We do not call ourselves thus as the Arians after Arius or the Dominicans after Dominic. Luther preached no new doctrine but the ancient doctrine of the eternal Gospel. He did not separate himself from the original true church, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone; he only separated himself from the fellowship of those who had fallen away from the ancient faith and who misused the name of the Catholic church to bind consciences to human regulations. To demonstrate this thoroughly is the very task we have set ourselves with this paper. For the present we refer our readers only to a few

testimonies of Luther himself, from which it is clear that it was not a matter for him to spread his own human ideas but that he pressed solely upon God's Word. He says among other things at the close of his splendid *Church Postil*:

"Oh, that God would grant that my exposition and that of all teachers would perish and every Christian would take up the bare Scripture and God's Word itself. From this my chatter you see how impossible and unequal God's Word is compared to all men's words; how no man can sufficiently attain and explain one single word of God with all his words. Whoever could come to it without glosses and explanations would have no need of my and all men's glosses; indeed, it would only hinder. Therefore come in, come in, dear Christians! and let my and all men's explanations be only a scaffolding for the right building, that we may seize, taste, and remain in the bare clear Word of God itself, for God alone dwells in Zion."

Even Luther's most bitter enemies have had to testify that it was the Holy Scripture above all to which he pressed and which he therefore spread among the people. To prove this I will cite only one passage from the writing of a Roman-Catholic author, a certain Florimund Raemund, who otherwise wrote violently against the Protestants and took active part in their persecution. He says in his *History of the Origin ... of the Heresies of the 16th Century*:

"The common people (in Luther's time) went about everywhere with the Bible, which had been translated into the mother tongue. One saw them lying on all tables and benches. The artisans had the Bible in their workshops and the women on their knees. The whole world busied itself with reading the Bible. Those armed with these books, as soon as they met a priest or a member of a spiritual order, straightway began a dispute with them. One demanded that the Mass be shown him from Scripture; another, purgatory; a third, infant baptism; a fourth, the Trinity. Finally they wished to have all articles of faith proved with express words and rejected the unwritten Word of God and the apostolic traditions. For the arch-heretic Luther had taught: The Scripture (whose exposition he allowed to all) is alone the judge of all disputes in religion."

But whether Luther despised the true church and wanted to found a new church, we hear from him himself. He writes among other things in 1532 *Against Certain Mob Spirits*:

"I would rather let the wisdom and laws not only of all mob spirits but of all emperors, kings, and princes testify against me than hear or see one iota or tittle of the entire Christian church against me. Indeed, one should not jest with articles of the faith which from the beginning, wherever Christianity has existed, have been held in unison. That is not like jesting with the laws of the pope or the emperor or other human traditions of the fathers or councils."

From this one sees that Luther by no means despised the church, as is so often said, but that he was an obedient son of it. As little as Luther followed the reputation of any man, yet he did not want in any way to stand on his own feet in a false way in dark self-centeredness as so many have done. He believed that through all the centuries there had remained an orthodox church. He then asked above all how that church had taught at all times. The

witness of the true church and agreement with it especially mattered to him. He considered her to be a pillar and foundation of the truth and wanted to follow it and be a member of the whole great army of the orthodox teachers of the church from the time of the Apostles until his time.

That one must hear and obey the church (Matt. 18:17) was never denied by Luther. That is not the matter of contention which of old has been argued between the Lutheran and Roman churches. But the question is instead whether one must obey those who take the authority of the church as their own because they have the office of the church among them but use it to command something which is contrary to the Gospel. That is what Luther denied. He maintained that if one should not hear the voice of Christ, he would also not hear the voice of his bride, his true church. Instead such a one would have the false prophets, who carry the name of the church as if in sheep's clothing under which they try to conceal the ravaging wolf. Luther departed from these false prophets, who would not allow a true reformation, but not from the Church.

*(Continuation follows.)*

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## **Part II — B. What Does It Mean to Be a Lutheran?**

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*(Issue No. 2, 23 September 1844)*

In the previous issue of our paper we showed that we have not given ourselves the name Lutheran and that we also do not use the name in such a way that it is sinful. We showed that we allow ourselves to be called Lutheran not because we want this name to separate us from other orthodox believers like the Corinthians did and further not because our faith is based upon Luther and finally not because we want to show that we confess a new doctrine and new church, a sect.

This begs the question then: In what sense do we truly call ourselves Lutheran? In brief we answer: Using this name indicates nothing else than that we are Christians who believe that the doctrine which was again brought to light in these last times from God's word through Luther is the true doctrine. Whoever confesses this doctrine with his mouth we call a Lutheran. But we believe a true Lutheran is only he who believes this doctrine with his heart through the working of the Holy Spirit and who has the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

A true Lutheran and a true Christian, the Lutheran church and the Christian church, God's word and Luther's doctrine — these are all one and the same to us. Therefore with joy and confidence we make that well known verse our proclamation: "God's Word and Luther's Doctrine, now and forevermore."

We don't mean by this that Luther spoke and wrote as an apostle from immediate enlightening of the Holy Spirit. But we do want to give witness that Luther's doctrine as we have perceived it is drawn from God's Word and that also through him the reformation of the church, which everyone knows was necessary, was accomplished. As Luther himself once advised the Lutherans who in 1528 were required by Duke George to give answer for their faith: "They want to remain with the holy gospel — Luther himself will not be Lutheran if he does not purely teach the holy Scripture." (Werke, Halle, XXI, 234).

We know well what we should expect in these days when explaining that with the strongest conviction of the heart we believe that the Lutheran church is the true church of Jesus Christ on earth.

The most gentle of our opponents will say: "Indeed, we believe the Lutheran church is a church but not the church of Christ. But the belief that there are more true churches we leave to those who can never be sure of their doctrine whenever in their consciences they feel guilty of false doctrine. These people quietly comfort themselves with that sweet dream of many true churches and thereby strive to appease their shrieking consciences. Yes, we leave it to them to publicly confess that they see themselves not as the church of Christ but only as a sect. We ourselves, however, give thanks to God that he has brought us to fellowship in his true church and made us certain and joyful to confess before all the world that we belong to her and not to a sect."

But perhaps now many will say: "We hear that! We've heard that language before! Those who belong to the sects speak just like that. In fact that is the most certain sign of a sect that they are so isolated that they make themselves into the only church that can save and damn everyone who has a different faith. So we can see that you Lutherans are true brazen papists. Isn't the belief in a particular church as the only-saving church a fundamental doctrine of the papists? See, you give yourself away!" We ask everyone who would make this objection not to be hasty in their judgment and first let us explain. Wait until we explain our true meaning and you have given it careful consideration.

We are in no way so fanatical and so narrow in recognizing the hidden kingdom of Christ that we would think that it consists only of those who call themselves Lutheran. Never! We know that this church is not contained within the boudoirs of a human name, a country, or a time. Instead it encompasses the entire inheritance of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that our church is so great and glorious to us; for this reason we want to do our small part

and give public witness, pray, fight and remain with her until our last breath despite all insult that is laid upon her.

In the first place, the Lutheran church is not restricted to those who from youth have held this name or even to those who took it up later in life. We extend our hand to everyone who submits himself to the written word of God without guile and who carries the true faith in our dear Lord Jesus Christ in his heart and confesses it before the world. We consider such a one as our partner in faith, as our brother in Christ, as a member of our church, as a Lutheran, no matter in what sect he lies hidden and entangled.

We well know that God can keep for himself thousands of his children even where everything appears to be devoured by Baal worship. (1 Ki 19:9-18). We know that God is so powerful that God's children are also born where this word is only preached very sparsely and mixed with many doctrines of man, indeed, that Christ rules in the midst of his enemies (Ps. 110:2). We therefore condemn no man no matter what he calls himself but instead merely proclaim that divine judgment: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Whoever does not believe, he will be damned."

It is one thing if it is asked: "How is the church recognized and where is she seen?" It is another to ask: "Where is the church?" We answer the first question: "She is recognized by the pure preaching of God's word and by the right use of the holy sacraments." The second we answer: "The Church is the congregation of all believers. (See the Augsburg Confession VII and VIII). Therefore, in the forward to the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church our forefathers say among other things:

"With reference to the condemnations, censures, and rejections of false and adulterated doctrine, especially in the article concerning the Lord's Supper, ... it is not our purpose and intention to mean thereby those persons who err from a certain simplicity and who do not blaspheme the truth of the divine Word, and far less do we mean entire churches ... On the contrary, we mean specifically to condemn only false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked teachers and blasphemers. ... We have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us in all things. These people follow their own simplicity and do not understand the issues but in no way approve the blasphemies which are cast against the Holy Supper. ... We also have great hope that, if they would be taught correctly concerning all these things, the Spirit of the Lord aiding them, they would agree with us and with our churches and schools to the infallible truth of God's word."

In this sense, therefore, it says in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession in the 27th Article "Concerning Monastic Vows:" "We do not say this in reference to all. There may be some in the monasteries who know the holy gospel of Christ and do not set any holiness upon their traditions." Luther agrees with this in his private writings. He shows not only that

God kept for himself a holy seed of his children in the darkest times of the rule of the pope but also that even now after the progress of the evangelical light through the Reformation there are righteous souls held in papal chains who are members of the true church. To bring forth just one example, he says in his explanation of Genesis 28:17:

"The pope and his crowd are not the church. When it is objected: Do they not still have baptism and the Lord's Supper etc.? I answer: 'Those who have the pure word and baptism belong to us and the true church. Those however who keep the religious pomp of human statures are not the church. Although they have the text of the gospel, they have it in vain.'"

Luther makes the same judgment concerning sincere people who according to external fellowship belong to other sects. He writes in his letter Concerning Rebaptism (Werke, Halle, XVII., 2675):

"We must confess that the enthusiasts have the Scripture and God's Word in other articles. Whoever hears and believes it from them will be saved even though they are unholy heretics and blasphemers of Christ."

Likewise, the old Lutheran theologians never denied this basic tenet that not only those are to be considered Lutherans who call themselves by that name. They always taught that there were innumerable people who carry the name in pretense who through their fleshly ways show that they are not members of the true church, not members of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, not true Christians. Further they always taught that there are innumerable others who have never called themselves Lutheran and who still are true Christians and therefore Lutherans in fact and in truth.

Of all the many witnesses which could be brought forth here one will suffice. In 1573 the Reformed in France (generally called the Huguenots) suffered the most dreadful persecutions from the papists and during the infamous bloodbath of Paris in the span of two months 70,000 of them were murdered with unheard-of satanic cruelty. N. Selnecker, a Lutheran theologian (known for his glorious Hymn: "All Glory be to God on High"), who was one of the authors of the Formula of Concord and who was exiled from Leipzig through the machinations of the Reformed wrote the following judgment:

"Indeed in the persecutions, which occurred in France, the Netherlands and other places, many innocent people were miserably slaughtered on account of religion and many even out of the masses who are Sacramentarians were found to be martyrs with whom even a heart of stone must rightly have compassion. But, dear God! They all died as Lutherans, not on account of their doctrine of the Holy Supper, but because they would not worship the horror of the pope. Therefore, in their need God stood by them and recalled them to himself with joy and comfort. He covered up their weakness and delusion in regard to the holy Supper wherein they had been placed and misled. He showed them patience. Our holy God always turns the fault and need of his believers, which is not defended deliberately out

of stubbornness, into that which is best." (See: Brev. resp. ad crimen Danaei).

Thus speaks a man who rejected the false doctrine of the Reformed to the utmost. However here he shows that he was motivated not by a desire to condemn and by a sectarian spirit but rather from a love of truth. Although Lutherans are usually accused of intolerance, narrowness, and love of condemning people on account of their rejection of all false doctrine, no one deserves this accusation less. For if they have the name rightly, they never restrict the true church to those who use this name.

Even less do we believe that the church to which we belong is confined to some particular land or some particular time. With the name Lutheran we confess that we belong to the true catholic (universal) church, whose doctrine Luther preached. In our public confessional writings, it is clearly said concerning this:

"In the creed it is a comforting article where it says: 'I believe in a catholic universal Christian church.' This shows that no one should think that the church is like other external political bodies bound to this or that land, realm, or class of people as the people of Rome likes to say. Instead it is certain truth that that group and those people who are spread out there and there in the world from the east to the west, who truly believe in Christ, who then have one gospel, one faith, one baptism and sacrament, who are ruled by one Holy Spirit are the true church. This even though they may have different ceremonies (See Apology Art. 7)."

Luther witnesses to the same thing with these words:

"The church is not only under the Roman church or the pope but instead in the whole world just as the prophets have proclaimed that the gospel of Christ would come into all the world (Psalm 2:19). The church bodily is spread out under the pope, the Turk, the Persians, the tartars and everywhere else. But spiritually Christendom is gathered in one gospel and faith, under one head which is Jesus Christ." (See the appendix to The Large Confession of 1528).

We cannot go on without bringing forth one more quotation of Luther in order to give verification that a sectarian view of the church was entirely foreign to him. Concerning Galatians 1:2 he says:

"Therefore, the church is holy even where the fanatics are dominant, so long as they do not deny the Word and the Sacraments; If they deny these, they are no longer the church. Wherever the substance of the Word and the sacraments abides, therefore there the holy church is present, even though Antichrist may reign there, for he takes his seat not in a stable of fiends or in a pigpen or in a congregation of unbelievers but in the highest and holiest place possible, namely, in the temple of God (2 Thess. 2:4). From this it is certain and obvious that God's temple must be and remain even under spiritual tyrants who rule and storm. For above all, even under the tyrants, the right faith etc. is found. Therefore, a short and easy answer can be given to the question: the church is everywhere in the entire world if only the gospel and the sacraments are there. But the Jews, Turks, enthusiasts and mob spirits or heretics are not

the church. For these deny and destroy such things."

What has been said concerning the church being restricted to some particular place can also be said concerning being restricted to some particular time. As long as there has been an orthodox church on earth there has also been a Lutheran church. She is (as strange as it may seem) as old as the world for she has no other doctrine than the patriarchs, the prophets, and apostles received from God and preached. It is true the name Lutheran was first used some 300 years ago but not the thing itself which is indicated by the name. When we are asked so often: "Where was the Lutheran church before Luther?" it is very easy to answer: "Everywhere there were still Christians who believed with their hearts in Jesus Christ and in his word who would not allow themselves to be diverted by any human regulations from the one faith that alone saves. Or at least in the end at the time of death they took refuge in this faith."

The Roman Catholics admit against their will that our doctrine is not new but instead was confessed before Luther in all places. Incessantly they have accused us by saying the Lutheran doctrine is only the rewarmed heresy of the Waldenites, the Albigenites and the Hussites. Reinerius writes concerning how old and how widespread the doctrine of these groups was and of what their supposed heresy truly consisted. He first pretended to be a Waldenite and entered the ranks of their preachers and then finally became the general inquisitor against the heretics. He reports:

"Among all the sects there are now or ever have been there is none more pernicious to the church (of the pope) than that of the Poor from Lion (This is what Waldenites were called), and for two reasons. First, because no heresy is older than this one. For some say that they have existed since Sylvester's time and others say since the time of the apostles. Second, because none is more universally distributed as this one for there is almost no land in which this sect has not established itself undetected. Third, while all other sects arouse an abhorrence against God with their open wickedness the Waldenites and Lugdunites alone on the other hand have a great appearance of holiness because they live right before men and believe rightly concerning god and accept all the articles which are contained in the Creed. They hate and mock the Roman church alone and say that it is a church of the godless and the prostitute who in Revelation sits on the beast. They say that she fell in the time of Sylvester when the poison of temporal worldly things entered into the church. They also say that the pope is the head of all error and is full of the desire for glory and money."

With this the Roman Catholics themselves admit that such witnesses for the apostolic faith and against the unapostolic papacy have always existed and they confess that Luther merely once again brought forth the doctrines of these witnesses of the truth. And so they confess openly that the Lutheran church had her members even before Luther even in the midst of the papacy. For with the church it is a matter of doctrine and not the name.

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### Part III — C. Why Do We Continue to Keep This Name?

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*(Issue No. 3, 5 October 1844, and continued in Issue No. 4, 19 October 1844)*

In the first articles under this name we claimed that according to his own explanation Luther did not want the disciples of Christ to name themselves after him and further that not only those people were Lutheran who carried the name explicitly but instead that all true Christians are included in the name Lutheran whether they are called Lutheran, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Methodists etc. Therefore, perhaps the question will now arise: "Under such circumstances how can you still adhere to the Lutheran name? How can you in good conscience still keep a name which serves to separate you from others when you protest so strongly against the accusation of ecclesiastical division and sectarianism?" — It is time to clearly speak to this point.

First, we answer this question with another question: How should we name ourselves in order to do what is right? It is certain that the name of a church can not merely be some meaningless title but that it should accurately express what she truly is, namely, what she believes, teaches and confesses. If we do not want to be hypocritical, the name under which we proceed would give a plain clear answer to the question: "Of what and of whose faith are you?"

Certainly, some will now say: "Why don't you call yourselves Christians?" We answer: we do use that name. And we hold this name so near and dear that we are willing to offer blood and life for this name. We became Christians already in baptism and that and nothing else is our highest comfort and peace. Whoever is not a Christian and yet is a Lutheran and wishes to lose the first name in favor of the second does not know the meaning of either name.

With pleasure we remember a poem found in Young's *Nightly Devotions*:

*A Christian! What a noble name! The most lofty title a man can have! And yet men wipe you, O holy cross, from their brow as the most shameful of marks? shaking (their head) the angels see this as they ever tremble. They fly back from the lost and who know whether it is more from astonishment or from sadness that they here quit their office in despair.*

Indeed, there was a time when it was enough to say: "I am a Christian." This was sufficient to confess the true faith in one's heart especially in the first three hundred years of the

Christian era. Such confessor indeed often awaited the death of a martyr. So, what are the special circumstances now with this name? Since Christianity is split into a thousand sects who would know what we believe if we merely wanted to confess: We are Christians! Are there not many who want to be known as Christians who even deny Christ and struggle against him denying his eternal deity and completely sufficient redemption? Are there not many who put themselves forward as preachers of the gospel only on account of greed who indeed no longer believe in Christ and his holy word but who want to keep the old tradition of going to church?

Indeed, a man would need no other name than the name "Christian" in order to confess his faith if everyone was as honorable, or rather as audacious and impudent, as certain Mr. Oludwig in New York and a certain Mr. Kock in St. Louis. For these have publicly acknowledged an irreplaceable contempt toward the Crucified and ceremoniously erased themselves for the list of those who want to have a part of the redemption of the Son of God. No other name would be needed, I say, if everyone in our days who wanted to depart from the word of Christ so clearly acknowledged the matter and would renounce the Christian name. But now since the enemies of Christ adorn themselves with this name in order to eat his bread everyone can see that a time has come in which the friend of Christ must clearly declare himself if he does not want to deny his beloved Savior before the world.

Now perhaps others will say: "So you don't want that! Fine, then call yourselves Catholic. But to this suggestion we say: God forbid! Indeed, the laughable accusation is often made against Lutherans that they are very much like the Catholics. But who was it that first in public writings truly attacked the Roman papacy as the chair of the antichrist, revealed it to all the world, mortally wounded and killed it? Was it Zwingli? Was it Calvin? Was it Wesley? Wasn't it our Luther? Did not all other true and supposed reformers continue the attack on the enemy from within the fortress which Luther had taken in the heat of battle? How could Lutherans call themselves 'Catholic' when the archenemy of the Lutheran church calls himself by this name so that with this beautiful name, he might hold captive the consciences of the souls freed by Christ?"

For indeed the name Catholic is a glorious name for it means the universal Christian church which was established by the apostles and spread out upon all the earth outside of which there is no salvation. Obviously, no one can be a Christian who would not confess himself as belonging to the church which is catholic or universal in the truth. And there was a time when the true church used this name and with this name separated herself from all false doctrines and their sects. And it has a glorious sound. How wonderful the name catholic sounds, for example, in the mouth of Athanasius or Augustine when they use it against the sects of the Arian, the Donatists and others.

How glorious the name rings in the time of the Roman bishop Gregory the Great who completely rejected the title of the universal bishop of Christianity. Gregory wrote to Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria among other things:

"You allowed a haughty designation in the title of your letter in that you grant me the title of the universal pope. I ask that hence forth you do no such thing." (L. VIII. ep. 30).

In another place this Roman bishop (who died in 604 AD) wrote that until his time no Roman bishops had been willing to carry this title for fear that the true faith would be lost, and a bishop would become the forerunner of the antichrist.

While the bishops of Rome still wrote in this manner and were appalled that by accepting the title of universal bishop over all Christianity Christ, who is the true head of the entire church, would be robbed of his honor — at that time there was still a true church which called itself the catholic or universal church. But what is the meaning of the word Catholic Church now? It is the fellowship of those who recognize the bishop of Rome as the head of the church, as standing in the place of Christ and God himself. They recognize him as infallible and give his commands unconditional obedience. They must therefore worship all the unquestionable errors of the papacy such as: the sacrifice of the Mass, praying to the saints, purgatory, the worship of images and relics, the pope's indulgence, human works unto salvation and self chosen works, the forbidding of the bible and marriage, tradition or the unwritten Word of God, compulsory fasts etc. etc. which all the confessions and catechisms of the new Roman Catholic Church teach along with the explicit explanation that outside of this faith no one can be saved. (Prof. fid. cath. e Conc. Trid. a S.P. Pio IV extracta, No. 28) Since from this it is now clear that the name "Catholic" has a new meaning, namely the Roman papacy with all its atrocities and in no way the universal Christian Church, and thus indicates a sect, obviously no one who recognizes the Word of God as the true rule of the Christian faith can trouble us to use this name.

Perhaps another will say: OK, then call yourself Reformed. For that is indeed what you want to be, a church cleansed of all false doctrines and wrong practices. It is true that this name too when understood in accordance with the original meaning of the word gloriously shows what the Lutheran church claims itself to be. She even calls herself such in her symbols. But would it be honorable to use a name which originally indicated what we intended but which now has an entirely different meaning and would be understood entirely differently? Wouldn't we then be committing the sin of having a secret reservation taking our own words to mean something different than everyone understood them? God preserve us from such a thing! An honest man must speak in such a way that he reveals the true sense of his heart with his words. The character of the true church has therefore been the utmost honesty. All false churches have attempted to draw as near as possible to the

orthodox confession in their expressions in order that their erring ideas might be craftily covered up and they then can keep secret reservations (as to the meaning). Therefore, the church spoke all the more clearly and wrote and confessed her doctrines more precisely and distinctively because this became more necessary as time went on if she didn't want to be misunderstood.

But what is understood now by the name "Reformed church"? It identifies the fellowship of those who have accepted the ideas of Zwingli and Calvin. The so-called Reformed confess that through baptism a man is not born again; it is merely a sign and seal of grace but not a means of grace. The name "Reformed" also refers to those who confess that the holy Supper is merely a meal of remembrance in which the body and blood of Christ are not eaten at all according to Zwingli and only spiritually according to Calvin. But in no way is it truly present (as Christ says) and therefore it is not eaten sacramentally with the mouth. The name "Reformed" further refers to those who confess that God predestined some to salvation and others to damnation according to and absolute decree. For it says in the most important public confession of the Calvinistic-reformed church, namely, in the Synod of Dort: The Reformed churches teach that the reason why God chose some and passed by the others" (rejected them) is not their unrepentance and their lack of faith, but rather only the pleasure of God." (Syn. Dord. p. 535). Further in this confession it says: "it was entirely the free decree of God that Christ should truly redeem from every people, clan, race and every tongue those and indeed those alone who were elected from eternity." (Cap. 2, Art. 8).

Who is not alarmed that this is really the doctrine of the Reformed church? Indeed, might no many who call themselves Reformed be alarmed when they read this, those who did not suspect that their church sometimes openly, sometimes secretly taught such errors in their public confessions. The Reformed church contradicts the clear words of Christ concerning the holy sacraments. For Christ speaks clearly concerning both: "This is my body; This is my blood. Truly, Truly I say to you, if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Further, the Reformed church with their doctrine of the election of grace denies the highest comfort of the gospel, that god desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). She tears the sinners from Christ and does not let them come and draw near full of confidence. She gives them nothing except the anxious expectation of whether they are elected or rejected by God. Indeed, the Reformed church with that doctrine blames God that not all men are saved and therefore mocks his eternal mercy in Christ.

So? Since the name "Reformed" indicates this faith can we Lutherans use it who simply remain with God's clear words and recognize the essence of the Gospel to be the article that Christ is the savior of all sinners? If someone comes to him will he not send them away? No way!

And this is why we also can not call ourselves Episcopalian, Presbyterians, Baptists and the like. Namely, all these groups, in addition to many other great errors, teach the errors of the Reformed concerning the sacraments especially the Presbyterians and Baptists. They also accept this teaching concerning eternal election.

Now perhaps many others will say: "But what can you find against the name 'Evangelical'? Wouldn't it be right to exchange the name Lutheran with this name? With this name you wouldn't be required to accept a doctrine that you thought was false, would you? Don't you know that the Evangelicals are made up of those who permit full freedom in the articles in which the Lutheran and Reformed church disagree and leave it to every conscience as to what he will preach as the right understanding?" Of course, we know that. That is why we can no longer use the name Evangelical. The name itself is indeed wonderful and precious. Indeed, it was the Lutheran church which for a long time was the only one called Evangelical. For two or three hundred years whoever confessed: I am an Evangelical, confessed that he was a Lutheran as all the world knew. It was indeed through Luther that God laid his Gospel again into the hands of all.

But times have changed and with them the customs and meanings of names. He who now says: I am an Evangelical, confesses that he is such a Christian that no one can tell what he believes in many of the chief articles of the Christian religion. Now I ask, how can one who believes what he preaches is true and does not garble the truth but instead desires to fully confess it, how can he (no matter what he believes is true) confess to belong to a church which uses two different types of confessional writings which are contrary to one another and which reject one another? How can he belong to a church which has no clear confessions and indeed in which two different types of faith are praised as good, the truth and lies? (For two doctrines contrary to one another can not both be true!)

Wouldn't one think it's impossible for men who believe the entire Bible is true to come to think that the new so-called union or Evangelical church is the last blossom of the kingdom of God in the world, the outer court of the divine temple of a thousand year kingdom of Christ upon earth (awaited by enthusiasts)? This church was established by the Prussian King and forced upon tyrannized congregations against their will and smuggled in with all kinds of intrigue and eagerly promoted by most rationalists! Instead won't the result of this church be the return of the time of the Tower of Babel and its confusion of languages? And in place of the true unity of faith and spirit of the Christian church doesn't it establish an external ceremonial union of people who believe differently? Through this new Evangelical Church isn't the doubt over certain points of contention between the Lutheran and Reformed raised to the point of an article of faith and isn't the forfeiting of the truth given as the answer to the supposed orthodox? And doesn't the new Evangelical Church through her default confession that this and that article of faith can be taught differently here and

there clear the way to the time when everything which is clearly spoken in God's Word is explained to be uncertain and indiscernible?

Then wouldn't the explanation of Scripture be left to the arbitrary nature of every enthusiasts and rationalist? Isn't the fear well founded that if a congregation constitutes itself first as Evangelical without the foundation of an explicit confession that there a rationalist preacher will follow the Evangelical preacher there? Won't that of necessity happen? Doesn't one of them consider to be wrong precisely what the other says is right. If the Evangelical preacher first says: "The explanation of this verse about the sacraments, predestination etc. is left to every man's conscience," so that no one will be declared a heretic over a difference in these points, can't the rationalist then demand this right of freedom in the explanation of Scripture and use it many other points?

In short, that which is now called the Evangelical Church lacks a confession of truth in the most important parts of Christian doctrine and declares that this is unimportant, unessential and of no importance and that the Word of Christ is uncertain. Therefore she can be seen as nothing else than a fellowship of those who are indifferent, that is, of those who consider true and false doctrine to be of equal importance. Therefore it is impossible for us Lutherans to any longer call ourselves Evangelicals in order not to be confused with these people and thus deny our faith. All the more we must call to all the Lutherans who have allowed themselves to be fooled by the beautiful Evangelical name and to be lured into the net of false union: "How long will you vacillate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, so follow hi! If however Baal is God then follow him." (1 Kings 18.)

Perhaps another will then say: "All right, then call yourselves Protestant." It is true that for a while after 1529 the Lutherans alone were called Protestants. In 1529 the Lutheran Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg and other Lutheran princes and cities of the kingdom wrote a protest to the Imperial Diet in Speier. This protest was against the Diet's declaration that the sharp edit of Worms published in 1521 against Luther and Luther's banishment should be carried out. And from this protest the Lutherans were given this name. Although this name could well mean that we as orthodox believers would protest against all abuses and false doctrines, yet it is well known from history that later all those who separated from the papal Church were included under the name Protestants. This name too therefore in no way agrees with the faith in our hearts in that we protest just as much against the erring doctrines of all other churches just as against the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, it is becoming more customary in our days for those Protestants to even call themselves Evangelical-Protestants when in fact they don't protest against the doctrines of men but instead against Christ, his gospel and all the holy things of his church. Namely, these people, as is well known, have embraced the decision to entirely extinguish the sunlight of the gospel and to remove it from heaven to earth and instead use the torches, lights

and lamps of the wisdom of their reason and thereby finally bring about the long awaited enlightenment and maturity of the poor world which they mourn because she has unfortunately again lost the light of paganism and fallen into the darkness of Christianity! Who can ask us to use the same name as such Protestants and to be yoked together with them?

But since we live in America perhaps many, in light of the fact that we've rejected all the previous names, will give us the advice to call ourselves dear Methodists. This name does sound wonderful. Who would reject this name if only the thing itself were good and godly? We can not deny that the Methodist fellowship must have a very luring appeal for people who come here from corrupted congregations in Germany where so many belly servers sit in the seat of Moses. For contrariwise what zealots they find here for converting souls! What zealots in prayer, song and reading! What frankness in confessing their faith in word and deed! How much trouble most of them go to in order to gain heaven! But no matter how many inexperienced people consider all this to be sure marks of the true church none of this is decisive for those who are experienced in God's Word. The Savior tells us that which is necessary for the church of Christ with the words: "If you remain in what I say, you are my true disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31f.)

It is a question of remaining in what Christ says or in his words. Indeed, he who wants to be a living member of the church must also show it through his enthusiasm in sanctification. But the holiness of Christians can not save me. Only the pure word which they have and by which they remain can do that. This is precisely however what man looks for in vain in the most enthusiastic of Methodists. They depart from the clear words of Jesus Christ who is the True One and the Almighty not just in the doctrines concerning the holy Sacraments. They mock us therefore as wooden books that we remain simply by the words of our Savior and they instead unfortunately follow their reason and their false doctrines. They also build almost their entire Christianity, their certainly of their place in God's grace and their spiritual rebirth, upon their uncertain changing feelings. They follow their hearts. Since they do not want to keep themselves solely with the world and to establish everything upon it they obviously do not come to any lasting peace in Christ. They torment and agonize themselves in their own works and must finally hear the word: (Isaiah 55:2): "Why do you count your money where there is not bread and you work where you can not become satisfied? Listen to me and eat that which is god etc." With the Methodists, whom many think good of, that which is lacking above all is a pure doctrine of justification and still more the right application of the same. Therefore, so many among them continually learn but can not come to a knowledge of the truth. So many seek peace in themselves, in their battles and troubles and do not find it. For only Christ who offers himself to us in words and who wants to be grasped only in words through faith, is our righteousness before God

and our complete peace. It is impossible then for us Lutherans to call ourselves Methodists and thereby give witness that we trade the clear infallible and unchanging word for the appearance of human piety, works and sentiments.

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## Part IV — Conclusion

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*(Issue No. 4, 19 October 1844)*

After reading the last issue of this publication perhaps many will want to say to us: "Suppose what you said is true, that all the so-called parties have really included some departure from the Word of God into their confession of the articles of faith and must therefore be viewed as unorthodox: still you have not dared to deny that one may also be saved in such organizations! If you do not want to take back this concession, you have thereby disarmed yourself. For what is more necessary than for a church to be an institution for the salvation of its members? Why then do you so fear carrying a name that such an institution may carry? Why do you persist in being called Lutheran? Why do you not unite with those parties? Does the Lutheran church strive after something greater than eternal salvation?" It is necessary then for us to speak concerning this more clearly.

We agree that in all Christian parties there are souls which are saved. Still, in doing so we in no way are saying that it is all the same whichever religion one stays with and confesses. We are far from agreement with those who say today: "Believe what you want, only be a good man and then you will be saved." That may sound very correct to reason but it must be asked whether one can be a good man when he believes whatever he wants. We deny this. With this concession we in no way concede that there are many true churches.

We believe instead that there is only one truth, only one true explanation of the Holy Scripture, and therefore only one true orthodox church, and also only one institution unto salvation. For only the word and only the sacraments, which the church has as God's bearer of the keys, are that through which man is brought to salvation. With this concession, that people are saved in the sects, we don't want to suggest that a man can be saved through the doctrine in which certain parties have turned away from the faith of the true church. No, we know that every error, when it takes hold in a man, is a poison of death for the soul. Our intended meaning is this: There are many souls in unorthodox communions who are saved, not through that which makes the sect a particular sect, and not because they are members of these sects, but rather because although many externally are members of these

sects still in the heart (perhaps even without knowing it) they cling to a different doctrine namely that of the true church. This church is the mother which alone bears children to Christ.

Does it follow from this that the falsely teaching churches are just as much institutions unto salvation as the orthodox? Indeed not. If many are saved within them this happens because they still have held to the Bible, the Holy Sacraments, and the confession of many of the clear truths of the Gospel from the true church. But they have their own special names not because they hold to this and that doctrine of the true church but because they have added and removed things from such doctrine.

It must be true that since Christianity does not consists of merely one single church which everywhere confesses the same faith and the many different churches which exist contradict each other in their confessions, that either there is indeed no true church on earth, which has the unadulterated doctrine of Christ (which is impossible according to the promise of Christ), or from all the churches in all the world there can only be one which correctly carries the name "True Church." We hold the evangelical Lutheran Church as this "True Church" because she confesses the doctrines of the Word of God purely and clearly and takes nothing away from it nor adds anything to it. She teaches the use of the holy sacraments without addition or subtraction to the institution of Christ.

When on the other hand all other Christian parties depart from the clear words of Christ, when errors are the cause of their separate existence from the orthodox church, when their errors are the reason for their joining together, so then their names do not stand for the truths which they still have but rather for their own errors through which they have separated themselves from and left the true church.

A Methodist, for example, carries this his special name not because he believes in the divinity of Christ, of the orthodox church confesses this faith also. Rather the Methodist is called such because among other things he does not believe that those things which Christ has done are reckoned unto us but instead only that which Christ has suffered and because the Methodist strives for this and that great error and wages battle for these as for divine truth. Further, an Evangelical does not carry this special name because he confesses the Gospel with his mouth; for the orthodox Lutheran does this also. But rather the Evangelical is called this because he has the false idea that for the sake of love, for the happiness of man, and for the sake of peace here in time no importance can be laid upon certain truths but must rather be sacrificed for such peace.

Therefore I ask: When the unorthodox have separated themselves through their name from the orthodox, can the Orthodox, without denial of his faith, carry their name and confess himself one of them? Indeed not! The orthodox person instead has the duty to distinguish

himself by his name from the unorthodox. As Cyprian says: "Let us be separated from them as they have fled from the church." (Ep. I, 3. Ad Cornel). For no one believes that he who has recognized the errors of his church and yet will not leave it and wants to remain in the communion of the false church for the sake of temporal considerations is a true Christian who has the right faith and can be saved. This applies only to those who do not recognize the secrets of evil and the deep things of Satan (2 Thess. 2:7; Rev. 2:24) and walk in simplicity of heart. From weakness they indeed externally follow the sedition makers in the kingdom of God but do not know of the evil things and in their heart they keep the true faith in Christ through God's grace. We see a beautiful picture of this in 2 Samuel 15:11.

But he who purposely errs or wants to persist in an unorthodox communion can not in any way comfort himself that he belongs to that communion of saints known only to God which is spread over all the world. Whoever wants to say: you have yourself said that one can be saved in a sect; therefore, I will remain in it although I see that there are abuses and errors within it," only fools himself by such reasoning. For God's Word clearly says: "Go out from them and separate yourself." (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Further: "Guard yourselves before the false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing. Inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 5:15). "My sheep hear my voice; a stranger they will not follow but rather they will flee before him." (John 10:5-27).

Indeed, it is true, that many who unintentionally take poison are rescued by an antidote; but is such a rescue to be hoped for by the one who willingly empties the entire flask of poison? So likewise, many simple people persevere in faith through God's oversight although their preachers mix in the poison of false doctrine with the gospel. But how can one comfort himself with this divine oversight when with knowledge and willingness he seeks such poisonous spiritual food. Whoever has a (divine) call to go into a quarantined house knows he stands under God's certain protection; but what should be expected when one goes in because of curiosity and mischievousness and is exposed to the disease. Is it any different when one wants to remain in a false church contrary to his recognition of the truth?

The orthodox church is Christ's ship in which Christ guides the rudder. His pure Word, which does not deceive, is the compass. And his believers navigate over the stormy sea of this world full of temptations into the harbor of blessed eternity. Indeed, many save themselves clinging to ship wreckage, which also the false churches have. But will he who chooses to save himself on a beam rather than to seek admission to the ship from which a thousand helping hands reach out to help him arrive the heavenly port through Christ's grace?

Even if all these comparisons are not correct in every detail, still we think they can enlighten those (who hear that many even in the sects will be saved) who think that it is all the same

whether one is in the orthodox church or some erring church, or whether he who is already in the midst of such a church fellowship delays at the crossroads.

But finally, many will say: "Why must it be the name 'Lutheran' that you use?" We answer: We know well that the real substance is not in the name for there are many who call themselves Lutheran who have given up the doctrine long ago, who have laid aside our church in her symbols, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Luther. Such false Lutherans are however easy to distinguish from the true Lutherans because our church has published these public confessions for all the world.

However, when we realize that:

1. It was Luther and no other through whom God in these last times has brought the pure clear doctrine of the Word of God together with the right use of the Sacraments again into the day and onto the plain, and
2. The communion of those who have confessed this pure doctrine of the Word of God with heart and mouth is therefore named and known by every Lutheran by this name

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we can only confess the faith which is in our hearts purely and completely with the name Lutheran.

If we would get rid of the name Lutheran the highest suspicion would be aroused that either we are ashamed of the old Lutheran doctrine, or that we no longer consider it to be the only true doctrine agreeing with God's clear Word and that a new false doctrine is in our hearts. As dear, therefore, as the truth is to us, as dear as God's honor and the salvation of our souls is to us, so little can we, especially in this time of widespread error, give up the name Lutheran. By this name we separate ourselves from all the unorthodox of all times and publicly confess the right faith of all time.

Because of this, the most serious accusation is made against us that by doing this we tear apart the body of Christ, disassociate ourselves from brothers, wield the sword against heirs of the same inheritance, and declare them to be our enemies. But those who say this are wrong. We disassociate ourselves only from the errors in which so many of our brothers are captured. And we would act without love towards them if we would not loudly witness against that which keeps them in such danger of souls. It is and remains impossible that this action which is in accordance with God's express command can lead to the ruin of God's kingdom. This fact can and must cancel out all other thoughts for a Christian, when it is asked what he should do in any particular circumstance.

But the divine command stands clear that we must not just keep our faith in our heart but

must confess it also with the mouth. And so, St. Paul says in Rom. 10:10: "One believes with the heart, and becomes righteous; and one confesses with his mouth and is saved." And so says Christ: "He who confesses me before men, he will I confess before my Father in heaven." Matt. 10:32-33. So, if we have the Lutheran faith in our hearts, so we must, if we want to be saved and not be eternally damned, confess it with our mouths. And so all orthodox Lutheran of all times have thus thought and thereby operated.

As one example, the Margrave of Brandenburg, at the time of the Reformation, when he was called a Lutheran in order to shame him, explained:

"I am not baptized unto Dr. Luther; He is not my God and Savior. I do not believe in him and will not be saved through him. Therefore, in this sense I am not a Lutheran. When I am asked however whether I confess with heart and mouth the doctrine which God has again given to me through his instrument Dr. Luther, then I do not hesitate nor am I timid to call myself Lutheran. And in this sense, I am and may I remain a Lutheran all my life."

Certainly, Luther fought the idea as an abomination that someone should call himself Lutheran on account of an idolatrous faith in Luther's person. Still he understood that he did not have to consider it objectionable if one calls himself Lutheran in order to distinguish himself with this name from the unorthodox and to confess himself to be a part of the orthodox church. Considering this circumstance, the dear man writes:

"I see a good admonition is needed for those whom Satan is persecuting. Among them there are some who think they might escape danger when they are attacked so they say: I do not agree with Luther, nor anyone, but with the holy Gospel, and with the holy or Roman church. So, they would be let go in peace and still hold my doctrine in their heart as Evangelical and remain with it. Truly such a confession does not help them and is the same as denying Christ. Therefore, I ask, let these beware. It is true that for the sake of body and soul you should not say; I am a Lutheran or a papists. For neither has died for you, nor is your master, but only Christ; and you should confess yourself to be a Christian. But if you think that Luther's doctrine is evangelical and the pope's is unevangelical, then you must not reject Luther. You will otherwise also reject his doctrine with him, which you recognize as Christ's doctrine. Rather, you must say: Whether Luther is a knave or a saint matters not to me; but this doctrine is not his but Christ's himself. For you see that the tyrants do not act such in order to bring down Luther but that they want to destroy the doctrine. And on account of the doctrine they question you and ask whether you call yourself Lutheran. Here you must not speak with words that bend with the wind, but rather freely confess Christ, whether Luther, Claude, or George has preached him. Let the person go, but you must confess the doctrine."

So also St. Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim 1:8): "Do not be ashamed of the witness of our Lord nor of me because I am bound for His sake." If it had been enough for Timothy here that he confessed the Gospel, Paul would not have commanded him not to be ashamed: not for the sake of the person of Paul, but rather for the sake of him who was bound for the sake of the Gospel. Now if Timothy had said: I cling neither to Paul nor to Peter but only

to Christ and yet he knew that Peter and Paul taught Christ, he would have thereby denied Christ. Then Christ speaks in Matt. 10 about those who preach him: "He who accepts you, accepts me; He who rejects you, rejects me." Why is that? Therefore, if someone keeps his messengers (who bring His word), it is the same as when He Himself and His word is kept." (Werke XX, 136).

Indeed, Mr. Oertel denies that the pope is in the place of God according to Catholic doctrine as we read in the *Wahrheitsfreund* (7, no. 39:309). Here, however, this man whom we deeply pity divulges that he in a moment of trial had thrown himself into the arms of the Roman Church without having carefully tested her doctrine. He continually places his trust in the Decrees of the Tridentine Council when he refers to publicly taught errors of the Catholic theologians and explains that Catholic doctrine is to be chiefly judged according to the decisions of this church council.

Mr. Oertel should take the trouble to open to Council. Trid. Sess. VI. Decret. de Reform. C. 1. Ed. Lugd. Page 52 and there he will find that this council calls the pope "the vicar of God himself on earth" and "he who hold the place of God himself on earth." Perhaps Mr. Oertel might have his eyes opened through fundamental study of the uncatholic doctrine of the Roman church. Mr. Oertel has explicitly called us to battle in his *Wahrheitsfreund*. We will not fail to appear on the battlefield.

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## Translator's Notes

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### *Part I – Translator's Notes*

*(From the Grok 2026 translation)*

[1] The objection from 1 Corinthians 1 & 3 is the classic argument against naming a church after a man. Walther addresses it directly.

[2] Luther's 1522 quote is the cornerstone of the entire article. The vivid "stinking bag of maggots" preserves the original German force.

[3] The key distinction: the sin is not the name but the party spirit that divides believers who hold the same doctrine.

[4] The Formula of Concord quote establishes that Scripture alone is the rule; all other writ-

ings (including Luther's) are subordinate witnesses.

[5] Raemundus (a Catholic writer) is used ironically to prove that even opponents acknowledged Luther's scriptural focus.

[6] Gregory the Great's rejection of the "universal pope" title shows that even Rome once resisted the very claims it later embraced.

[7] The Synod of Dort quote exposes the unconditional predestination taught by the Reformed, which Walther contrasts with the universal offer of the Gospel.

[8] The Prussian Union critique targets the 1817 forced merger of Lutheran and Reformed churches — the exact "Evangelical" compromise Walther warns against.

(From the Claude 2026 translation)

**"Rüstzeug Gottes" / "instrument of God."** Walther's preferred designation for Luther in this article is *Rüstzeug Gottes* — literally "armament" or "implement of God" — rendered throughout as "instrument of God" following the conventional vocabulary of Lutheran theological English. The term is deliberately non-hagiographic: Luther is a tool God wielded, not a saint one venerates. This nuance is essential to Walther's argument that Lutherans do not ground their faith in Luther the person.

**"Stinkender Madensack" / "stinking bag of maggots."** The Luther quotation of 1522 contains the notorious self-deprecation *armer stinkender Madensack* — literally "poor, stinking bag of maggots." The phrase is Luther at his most deliberate in the use of grotesque vernacular, and Walther cites it in full, without softening. The translation preserves the phrase literally, because to render it as "poor wretched creature" or similar would obscure both Luther's rhetorical intention (to refuse the honor with maximum vehemence) and Walther's rhetorical purpose in citing it (to show that Luther genuinely did not covet the name for himself). Any smoothing of the phrase is a falsification of both Luther's meaning and Walther's argument.

**"Lehre" / "doctrine."** Throughout this article, *Lehre* has been rendered consistently as "doctrine" rather than "teaching." The distinction matters: "doctrine" carries the formal, confessional weight appropriate to Walther's theological register, whereas "teaching" can suggest a more informal or provisional instruction. Walther's usage is always in the direction of the former.

**The Formula of Concord citation.** Walther's quotation from the Formula of Concord is taken from the *Epitome*, Article I (Rule and Norm), §§ 1–2. The translation follows the German text as Walther cites it, rather than reproducing the standard English edition (which renders the passage with slight differences). The purpose is to let the reader hear the text

as Walther’s original audience did.

**“Rottengeister” / “factious spirits.”** Walther’s title for Luther’s 1532 letter uses *Rottengeister* — rendered here as “factious spirits” to distinguish it from *Schwärmer* (“enthusiasts”). Both terms appear together in the Luther quotation from Galatians commentary in Part II (where they are rendered “enthusiasts” and “factious spirits” respectively), and consistency requires maintaining the same distinction wherever each term appears.

**Walther’s polemical rhetoric.** The repeated rhetorical-question structure — *Wie? ... Hört ihr’s? ... Das sei ferne!* — is characteristic of Walther’s Lutheran confessionalism at its most combative. The translation retains the exclamatory and interrogative cadences throughout rather than converting them to declarative prose.

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## Part II — Translator’s Notes

(From the Claude 2026 translation)

**“Alleinseligmachende Kirche” / “the alone-saving Church.”** Walther’s opponents deploy the term as a polemical epithet — the accusation being that Lutherans, in claiming to be *the* true Church, arrogate to themselves exclusively the grace of salvation. Walther’s reply is subtle and important: he distinguishes between the *marks* of the Church (pure preaching and right use of the Sacraments) and its *membership* (all true believers), and argues that the Lutheran claim is ecclesiological, not soteriological in a narrow sense — it concerns which *institution* rightly embodies and transmits the Gospel, not which *individuals* are saved. The term *alleinseligmachend* has been rendered “alone-saving” (hyphenated) throughout to preserve its compound force and keep the polemical charge visible. “Sole saving” is an acceptable alternative rendering but would require a gloss; “alone-saving” is self-explanatory.

**The Selnecker passage.** Nicolaus Selnecker (1532–1592) was one of the co-authors of the Formula of Concord and a prominent Lutheran theologian who had been expelled from Leipzig in 1574 precisely because Reformed influences had gained the upper hand at the Saxon court. His willingness to acknowledge martyrdom among the Huguenots — confessional adversaries whom he rejected in doctrine — is the key exhibit in Walther’s argument that Lutheran confessionalism is not identical with sectarian condemnation. The Latin citation (*Brev. resp. ad crimen Danaei*) refers to Selnecker’s *Brevis responsio ad crimen Danaei*, a polemical treatise; Walther cites it as a known quantity in the German Lutheran academic milieu.

**“Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr vergehet nun und nimmermehr.”** This verse, rendered

"God's Word and Luther's doctrine pass not away forever," was the masthead motto of *Der Lutheraner* and served as its programmatic declaration. Note that *Lehre* ("doctrine") has been rendered consistently as "doctrine" throughout rather than "teaching" — see the vocabulary note in the Part I Translator's Note. The word *nun* is slightly archaic even in 1844 German — it functions adverbially to mean "henceforth" or "from this time forth," intensifying *nimmermehr* ("nevermore / never again"). The translation "pass not away forever" captures the declarative finality Walther intends.

**"Schwärmer" / "enthusiasts" and "Rottengeister" / "factious spirits."** The term *Schwärmer* — literally "swarmers" — is Luther's characteristic designation for the Anabaptist and spiritualist movements of the Reformation era. English theological convention, following scholarly usage, renders it as "enthusiasts." *Rottengeister* — "faction-spirits" — is rendered "factious spirits." Where Walther or Luther pairs the two terms (as in the Galatians commentary cited here), both are rendered to preserve the distinction between them.

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### *Part III – Translator's Notes*

**On the rhetorical structure of Part C.** Walther's argument in this installment proceeds by the method of serial elimination: six alternative names are offered by imagined interlocutors — "Christian," "Catholic," "Reformed," "Evangelical," "Protestant," "Methodist" — and each is rejected in turn, not because the underlying idea is unworthy, but because each name has been colonized by a party whose errors make the name unusable for an orthodox confessor. This is a rhetorically disciplined move: Walther acknowledges the historical nobility of each term before demonstrating its present corruption. The cumulative effect is to leave no respectable label standing except "Lutheran."

**On "Evangelical."** Walther's assault on the name *evangelisch* is among the most historically pointed passages in the entire article. The target is unmistakably the Prussian Union church, established by royal compulsion in 1817, which had fused Lutheran and Reformed congregations and issued a common liturgy. Walther's phrase *von einem preussischen Könige gestiftete* ("established by a Prussian king") makes the anti-Unionist thrust explicit. For the Saxon immigrants who founded the Missouri Synod, this Union represented the proximate cause of their emigration in 1839.

**On "Methodists."** The Methodist section, which arrives last, carries particular polemical weight given the American context. Walther is addressing readers for whom Methodism was the most visibly energetic religious movement in their new country. His critique is not

of Methodist *morals* but of Methodist *epistemology*: the grounding of assurance in feeling (*Gefühl*) rather than in the external Word. The key term is *Buchstabler* — literally “letter-followers” or “literalists” — which the Methodists used as an insult against Lutherans who refused to interpret away the words of institution.

**On the Synod of Dort citation.** The German text cites “*Syn. Dord.* p. 535” and “*Cap. 2, Art. 8.*” The canonical reference for these passages is the *Canons of Dort* (1619), Head III/IV, Articles 9 and Head II, Article 8 respectively, though Walther’s page reference suggests he was working from a compiled edition rather than the primary canons directly. The translation preserves his citation as given.

**On “Buchstabler.”** The German *Buchstabler* has been rendered “letter-worshippers” rather than the more literal “literalists,” as the term carried a specifically contemptuous connotation in 19th-century Protestant polemics — implying slavish, spiritually dead adherence to the text. Walther quotes it as a charge the Methodists level against Lutherans, wearing it almost as a badge of honor.

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#### *Part IV — Translator’s Notes*

**On the argument structure of the Conclusion.** The *Schluß* addresses the objection Walther considers most dangerous: the argument from pastoral charity, namely that since souls may be saved in heterodox churches, insistence on confessional boundaries is mere sectarianism. Walther’s reply has two registers. First, theological: there is only one true church, and souls in the sects are saved *despite* the sects’ errors, not *through* them — they are saved by whatever residue of orthodox doctrine the sects still retain. Second, pastoral: willful persistence in error, once it is recognized, is a different matter from innocent ignorance, and Scripture’s commands to “come out from among them” are binding on those with knowledge.

**On the “poison” metaphor.** The poison / antidote image (*Todesgift* — “deadly poison” / *Gegengift* — “antidote”) is one of Walther’s most rhetorically charged images in the entire article. The distinction drawn is between accidental and willful ingestion: God’s providence may rescue those who inadvertently receive false doctrine mixed with the Gospel, but the same providence cannot be invoked as comfort by those who knowingly seek out poisonous teaching. This image builds directly from the earlier argument that the Lutheran name is not a separatist label but a diagnostic one.

**On the ship metaphor.** The ship (*Schiff*) image at the close of the Conclusion is a patristic commonplace — the church as the ark of salvation navigating the stormy sea of the world —

with roots in Cyprian and Augustine. Walther deploys it with deliberate modesty: "Even if all these comparisons do not hold in every particular." The image of "clinging to pieces of wreckage" (*Schiffstrümmen*) is Walther's own extension: those saved in heterodox communions are not passengers in a seaworthy vessel but survivors clinging to debris.

**On the Cyprian citation.** The phrase attributed to Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258) — "Let us be separated from them, as they have fled from the church" (*Ep. I, 3, Ad Cornel.*) — is somewhat freely rendered in the German. The thought is consistent with Cyprian's ecclesiology in *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, though the exact wording does not appear verbatim in modern critical editions. Walther likely worked from a Latin collection in common 19th-century circulation.

**On the Margrave of Brandenburg.** The attribution of the declaration to the Margrave of Brandenburg is consistent with Lutheran historical memory of Georg of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1484–1543), who was among the Lutheran princes present at Augsburg in 1530. The verbatim form of the declaration as Walther gives it reflects a confessionally transmitted version and may not correspond to any single contemporary document.

**On Luther's quoted passage.** Luther's extended quotation near the close of the Conclusion is drawn from *Werke XX*, 136 (Halle edition). The passage concerns those who, under persecution, seek to maintain Lutheran doctrine covertly while denying the name. Luther's insistence that the doctrine, not the person, must be confessed is the climactic argument of the entire four-part article.

**On OCR gaps.** The corrected German source (*VonDemNamenLutheraner\_Grok2026-CorrectedGerman.md*) is substantially complete and internally coherent for Parts C and the *Schluß*. No significant lacunae were encountered that required editorial reconstruction for the sections covered by this translation. The Grok endnote noting that "the OCR ends mid-sentence" in Issue 4 appears to apply to an appendix passage regarding a certain Mr. Oertel; that polemical postscript does not appear in the corrected German source as provided and has not been translated here, as it falls outside the core article text.

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#### *Terminology Glossary (Grok 2026)*

*Lehre* = doctrine (the pure Gospel recovered from Scripture) *Bekennntnis* = confession (public binding statement) *rechtgläubig* = orthodox / right-believing *Kirche* = Church (the one true visible church) *Sekte* = sect (divisive false teaching) *Gnadenmittel* = means of grace (Word + Sacraments) *Gnadenwahl* = election / predestination (rejected in unconditional form)

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*Historical Notes (Grok 2026)*

1844: Walther launches *Der Lutheraner* to counter rationalism and unionism among German immigrants. Prussian Union (1817): the forced Lutheran-Reformed merger Walther attacks in Part III. Selnecker on Huguenots: shows Walther's broad catholicity — even persecuted Reformed can die "as Lutherans."