

We Are The First “Evangelicals” (cont’d):

“Lutheran/Lutheranism” was the first Evangelical Christian denomination. Evangelical comes from the Greek word for “Good News” or “Gospel”. This is not to say that Lutherans were the first Evangelical Christians: from the Fall of our first parents all the way to the present day, all believers in the good news, in which God promised many salvation through the Seed of the Woman, Jesus Christ, are truly “Evangelical Christians,” whether they would apply this name to themselves or not. Indeed, when considered in this way, the term “Evangelical Christian” is blessedly redundant, inasmuch as to be a Christian is simply to believe in the Gospel.

Historically speaking, however, Lutherans were the first group to be publicly known as and called “Evangelicals” (Evangelischen) back in the sixteenth century. This was a way of distinguishing us from the “Catholics” of that day. As a matter of fact, we were called “Evangelicals” before we were ever called “Lutherans”: “Evangelical” is the name we chose for ourselves while “Lutheran” is the name chosen for us by the Pope and our adversaries in order to make us sound like heretical disciples of a particular person. “Lutheran” was originally a slur. Martin Luther didn’t like it, and it wasn’t his idea. But it stuck. And considering the remarkable and blessed legacy of Martin Luther, we are glad to bear the name today.