

**THE LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND THE
CIVIL WAR, PP. 1-159**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649028788

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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The Lutheran Church and the Civil War

By

CHARLES WILLIAM HEATHCOTE,
A.M. (Univ. of Penn'a), PH.D. (George
Washington Univ.)

*Instructor of Religious Education and Church History,
The Temple University*



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

© 9-19-21 J.H.

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Revised 12-28-42

*TO MY MOTHER,
My First Teacher in Church History,
This Volume is Affectionately Dedicated.*



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INTRODUCTION.

NO study of history can approach completeness and no explanation of its course approximate the truth that excludes from its view all but those outstanding and picturesque events of political struggle, diplomatic contention and armed warfare which, in the popular mind, are the most important happenings in the life of a people. Particularly is this true of the history of a democracy where, oft-times, the great forces are the most unobserved and the strongest influences are the product of the quiet leaven of individual or local opinion gradually determining the mass action of the great majority of the "common people" whose individual acts are little heralded and individual lives all but unrecorded. If from the thoughts and actions of men it would teach us to understand the needs and aspirations of other men, if from the past it would teach us lessons for the present and the future, history, in its investigations, must pass beyond the sphere of mere governmental action and study people, people in all that concerns their daily lives, the ordinary people who make up most of the world and live and die by the millions each passing decade, leaving the world, because of their lives even as well as because of the lives of the great, better or worse for those who follow after them.

The religious life of peoples and the interplay between religious forces and political and economic forces has too little concerned students of modern history. When church and state were one, when religious differences fostered wars, both national and civil, when the state was freeing itself from the church and the church from the state, religion was politics and the two were often inseparable. But here, in America, where every man may worship God as he wills and the church flourishes independently of the state, we are too apt to overlook the fact that the church exercises an influence on the people, even in matters seemingly political or economic only, more potent by far than is generally appreciated or, oftentimes, even known to any but the most conscious observers. It is with the relation to each other of the Lutheran church and slavery that our author here deals and his study, it is hoped, is the forerunner of many other like contributions to our national history.

The Lutheran church in America, conceiving the true mission of the church to be the spread of the Gospel and the saving of men's souls and believing that political and social issues are the province of citizens in their civil capacities and not in their ecclesiastical organizations, has persistently refused to permit itself to be drawn, either as a champion or an opponent, into the arena of affairs of state, whether they be political or of so-called "social reform," just as, with equal steadfastness, it has resisted any at-

tempted exercise of state domination or control in purely religious matters. As long as the institution of slavery remained a political, an economic or even a social problem, the Lutheran church, as such, took sides neither for nor against it, but, when the progress of ideas forced slavery to the front as a great moral issue on which the church could not remain silent, the Lutheran church, like others of the great American denominations, found its district synods and individual churches declaring themselves and assuming positive positions. The conflicting views of its members, reflecting the influences of their respective geographic environments, split the Methodist church into a northern and southern branch in 1844-1845, the Baptist church into a northern and southern branch in the same years and practically split the Presbyterian church into a northern and southern branch in 1850, although that denomination retained its unity of organization until the Civil War. So conservative was the Lutheran church that it was not until after the Civil War had well begun, in 1862, that its southern churches severed their connection with the old General Synod and organized a separate general body on Confederate territory. It is highly indicative of the essential unity of American Lutheranism, in its devotion to its historical doctrinal position and its conception of its mission to mankind, that this conservative denomination, which was the last to divide of the great denominations which split

over the Civil War issue, was the first to consummate a reunion of its thus divided parts in the organization, in November 1918, of the United Lutheran Church in America by the constituent synods of the old General Synod, General Council and United Synod in the South.

Geographic unity, ethnic unity and religious unity were controlling factors in determining the degree of stability attained by the monarchical states of old. It is instructive to learn, from studies such as this preface, that still, in the modern democratic states, where church and state are separated, the sectional division of those of the same faith in separate ecclesiastical organizations is one step in the direction of political separation, while ecclesiastical unity of peoples from widely separated sections of a nation constitutes one of the most powerful bonds of nationality.

L. RUSSELL ALDEN.

Washington, D. C.