

**HENRY MELCHIOR  
MUHLENBERG, "PATRIARCH  
OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
IN AMERICA"**

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Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, "Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America" by William K. Frick

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**WILLIAM K. FRICK**

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ECCLESIA NON PLANTATA, SED PLANTANDA



**Heinrich Melchior Mühlberg, D. D.**

Born September 6th, A. D. 1711. Died October 7th, A. D. 1787.

BY FAITH HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

# HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG,

"PATRIARCH OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
IN AMERICA."

BY

REV. WILLIAM K. FRICK, D. D.,  
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER, MILWAUKEE.

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"He never trifled with a duty."—*Dr. W. J. Mann.*

"The Lutheran Church in this country is his en-  
during monument."—*Dr. E. T. Kretschmann.*

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The Patriarch Rublenberg.

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# HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG.

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## I.—IN TRAINING. 1711-1742.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE HANOVERIAN YOUTH.

The Pennsylvania Call—Religious Destitution in North America—Sources of this Biography—Muhlenberg's Ancestry and Birth—Death of his Father—Hard Work—Spiritual Diagnosis. (1711-1731.)

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.—ISAIAH vi. 8.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.—LAM. iii. 27.

On the sixth of September, 1741, more than one hundred and sixty years ago, two clergymen, at supper in Halle, Germany, had a conversation which entirely changed the career of the younger man, and still powerfully affects the course of things in the Lutheran Church of America.

The elder speaker was the second Dr. Francke, Director of the world-renowned Halle Orphan House. This institution was at that time the great centre of missionary activity in the Lutheran Church of Europe. To it had come the appeal for missionaries to lay the foundations of

Protestant and Lutheran missions in India, and it had supplied two worthy men in the persons of Ziegenbalg and Plütschau.

To it the West was now looking with equally anxious eyes. Francke and the Lutheran court chaplain, Ziegenhagen, of London, had for seven years been in correspondence with the German Lutherans of Pennsylvania with reference to a spiritual shepherd, and several delegations had visited Europe to press upon the Mother-Church the duty of caring for these neglected children of the New World.

In an open letter to a clergyman in Hanover, Dr. Ziegenhagen copied this description of the destitution in Pennsylvania in 1733 :

“We live in a country that is full of heresy and sects. As far as our religious interests are concerned, we are in a state of the greatest destitution ; and our own means are utterly insufficient to effect the necessary relief. . . . It is truly lamentable to think of the large numbers of the rising generation who know not their right hand from their left ; and, unless help be promptly afforded, the danger is great that, in consequence of the great lack of churches and schools, the most of them will be led into the ways of destructive error.”

Five years later the Pennsylvanians wrote : “There is not one German Lutheran preacher in the whole land except Casper Stoeber, now sixty miles distant from Philadelphia”—in Lancaster County. They were mistaken ; but the preachers were, in fact, few, and not one of them had the loftiness of character to command the confidence of the Lutheran dispersion, or the breadth of view to grasp the situation and bring order out of most lamentable confusion.

Three congregations of about five hundred communicants each, in and near Philadelphia, were clamoring for a pastor; yet, though so strong in numbers, they hesitated to pledge a fixed salary. Francke had his "doubts about sending a good man to America upon such an uncertainty." One thing, however, was clear to him: the conditions in sect-ridden Pennsylvania called for "a man of solid, commanding character." "And where," asks Francke, "can we find such a man?"

This evening, as the conversation drifted from Halle to India, and from India to America, the Lord opened Francke's eyes. He turned to his guest with some such query as this: "Will you go as missionary to the scattered Lutherans in Pennsylvania," adding, "for a few years on trial?"

The young pastor's instant reply was, "If it is the will of God, I not only will but must go where Providence points the way."

Who and what was this prompt and decisive individual, destined in the providence of God to write his name in large characters across the page of Eighteenth Century American Lutheranism? By birth and baptism Heinrich Melchior Muehlenberg, he is known and honored in American history as

#### HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG,

*Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America.*

It happened to be his thirtieth birthday on which this momentous decision was reached. For his early life we have an autobiography, entitled "Observations upon the Love, Goodness, Mercy,