

Wasn't Muhlenberg a Pietist?

A critical review of the life
and pietism of Henry Melchior
Muhlenberg in the light of R.
F. Scholz's review article:
Was Muhlenberg a Pietist?

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The epithet, "The Patriarch of the American Lutheran Church" has long been attached to the name of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg as a tribute to Muhlenberg's efforts in planting the Lutheran Church on American soil. In many respects it is a fitting tribute: Muhlenberg's accomplishments in the areas of stabilization, education, mission outreach, and perhaps most importantly, in organization, single him out for such high praise. Yet in giving the title "patriarch" to Muhlenberg we would not want to make more of the matter than is proper and historically correct. For while most Lutherans gladly and willingly accord Muhlenberg his due in establishing the ecclesia plantanda, not every Lutheran can share Frederick S. Weiser's optimism in saying, "Muhlenberg may well prove himself in time to be the spiritual father of all American Lutherans."¹ For not every Lutheran can be comfortable with "Patriarch" Muhlenberg's pietism.

Muhlenberg was a pietist, wasn't he? Most characterizations of the man, even by those most sympathetic to him, describe him thus.² However, in a recent review of Muhlenberg for the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, LCA pastor Robert F. Scholz proposes the view that Muhlenberg belongs to neither the "orthodox" or "pietist" camps of Lutheranism, but was rather "evangelical:" "How is Muhlenberg's position better described?...His loyalty was to an

1. F. S. Weiser, "The 'Muhlenberg Way'", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. 34, p 47.

2. Cf. for example W.J. Mann, Life and Times of H.M. Muhlenberg, p298ff.

evangelical understanding of the faith."³ After proposing a working definition of pietism Scholz concludes:

Perhaps it is time to drop the term (of pietism) where he (i.e., Muhlenberg) is concerned, identifying him simply as the evangelical Lutheran he confessed himself to be....As things now stand, the terms "pietism" and "orthodoxy" obscure as much, if not more, than they reveal about people and movements in Lutheran history and run the danger of serving as a kind of conventional wisdom and superficial substitute for genuine analysis. Where our understanding of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg is concerned, this is most certainly true.⁴

While it is true enough that a semantical problem does exist when talking about pietism (after all, there are pietists, and then there are pietists!), this does not mean that the term is altogether useless and can and should be discarded. Rather, when combined with "genuine analysis", such terms can be useful.

Perhaps the best place to start is to look at the concept of "pietism" itself as it manifested itself within Lutheranism in general and at Halle in particular.

In his History of Theology Bengt Hägglund makes the significant comment:

The Pietist movement, which penetrated Lutheran territory in the latter part of the 17th century and contributed to the diminution or the internal transformation of the orthodox Lutheran tradition,

3. Robert F. Scholz, "Was Muhlenberg a Pietist?", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 2, p 51.

4. *ibid*, p 65.

was not simply a reaction against certain weaknesses in the church life of the time; it was rather a new theological position, which was based on a new concept of reality and which bore within itself the seeds of the modern point of view.⁵

One area that evidenced this "new theological position" according to Hägglund was in pietism's approach to epistemology. Philipp Jakob Spener, the acknowledged "founder" of Lutheran pietism, found experience to be the ground of all certainty, both on the level of the natural and of the revelatory.⁶ Thus, for one to truly acquire theological knowledge, "one must have a personal experience and be born again through the Spirit."⁷ This differed from the orthodox point of view in that they taught that true insight into the corpus doctrinae required the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But, "since by the light of the Spirit the orthodox meant the light which is found in the Word itself, the true doctrine could be therefore proclaimed even by an unregenerate teacher," a point of disagreement with pietism.⁸

Other points of departure between orthodoxy and pietism on the part of Spener included a pietistic definition of faith that included not only the notitia, assensus, et fiducia of the orthodox definition, but also the concept that

5. Bengt Hägglund, History of Theology, trsl. by Gene J. Lund, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968) p 325. (emphasis mine)

6. *ibid*, p 327.

7. *ibid*, p 327.

8. *ibid*, p 327.

faith was "at the same time a living power, out of which the actual experience of renewal proceeds."⁹

Thus, Spener placed major emphasis on the concept of regeneration, the "granting of a new life." According to Spener:

Justification is the fruit of regeneration. The doctrine of imputation was therefore replaced by the idea that justification and sanctification form a unity. This unity is expressed by the term "regeneration" (or "new birth"), which no longer—as in the older tradition—coincided with the concept of the forgiveness of sins but designates an inner transformation which in turn is the source of the new life that characterizes the Christian man.¹⁰

Because of this unity between justification and sanctification, pietism always placed a strong emphasis on the sanctified life as the "testimony to a strong faith." And while the practical ramifications of sanctification à la pietism varied from one adherent of pietism to another, the emphasis on sanctification became a sine qua non for the movement in general.

Thus, pietism viewed experience as the ground of Christian certainty:

Orthodoxy had proceeded on the basis of objective reality and grounded the certainty of theological knowledge on the Scriptural principle, which was thought of as self-evident and, so to speak, self-creative of the knowledge that theology deals with. Pietism, on the other hand, proceeded on the basis

9. *ibid*, p 327.

10. *ibid*, p 328.

of experience; it looked upon the experience of the individual as being fundamental to religious knowledge or insight.¹¹

This corresponds with Scholz's own characterization:

In both theory and practice, the pietist moved from the subjective to the objective.¹²

It was at the University of Halle that pietistic theory became practiced under the leadership of August Hermann Franke and later, under that of his son, Gotthilf August. Halle pietism soon became a recognizable "brand" of the movement that differed from Spener in various ways and degrees. Franke, for example, insisted in contrast to Spener that a Christian should always be able to point to a "conversion experience" that was the fruit of an "inner struggle" brought on by the Law. Once a man was brought to the point of "rejecting the world and beginning a new life," faith, and its concomitant gift of forgiveness is given him. The result of this faith was true Christian life "characterized by stringent self-examination and the suppression of natural affections."¹³ Thus, the true Christian would avoid "worldly pleasures."

F. Bente catalogs the "aberrations of the Pietists in Halle" as being: 1) exaltation of "piety" over doctrine; 2) claiming sanctification as an addition to faith, rather than being contained in faith; 3) emphasis on the "peculiar penitential struggle" brought on by the Law; 4) comforting

11. *ibid*, p 329.

12. R.F. Scholz, *op cit*, p 56.

13. Hägglund, *op cit*, p 330.

the afflicted with their own "pulse of piety" and not with the objective forgiveness of Christ; 5) urging repentance and conversion as if man could force them himself; 6) assuring salvation on the basis of subjective piety rather than the objective promise of the Word of God; 7) that only the "revived" and "awakened" comprise the real Church, an ecclesiolae in ecclesia.¹⁴

This was the pietism Muhlenberg was in contact with during his association with Halle after 1737. However, it must be noted, as Scholz does, that Halle was not the place where Muhlenberg received his theological training. This was rather at the new University of Göttingen under Joachim Oporin. However, it was from Oporin that Muhlenberg learned to appreciate the basic thrusts of Halle pietism and make them his own.

Muhlenberg freely and frequently acknowledged his debt to Oporin. Thus, in 1780, over 50 years after leaving Göttingen, he recorded in his Journals a bit of homiletical advice "given us by the immortal Dr. Oporin."¹⁵ Of Oporin's basic theological thrust, Kenneth Lentz states:

Oporin's basic pietistic orientation is obvious. Nothing strengthens his classification among the theological pietists more than his repeated appeal to Biblical witness as the foundation of his theology;...his insistence upon the practical implementation of faith in a godly life on a high moral level supported by his own life of personal piety, plants him firmly in the pietistic camp.

14. F. Bente, American Lutheranism, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1919), vol I, p 73.

15. W.J. Mann, op cit, p 10; H.M. Muhlenberg, Journals, vol III, p 337.

In addition, his stress upon conversion, the conversion purpose of the sermon, the real presence of the Holy Spirit with His gifts in the Church, and the beneficial value of prayer are additional elements of pietism...¹⁶

One of Oporin's colleagues memorialized him with this characterization:

Ne veram quidem usquam virtutem esse, quae non ex fide christianorum proficisceretur. Haec suis auditoribus inculcare semper, haec omnibus suis scriptis contendere, haec tota vita sua, haec dum paulatim moritur, rebus manifestis comprobare.¹⁷

However, Oporin's pietism was not the "pure pietism" of Halle. He represented a more moderate pietism that included elements of orthodox theology. His appeal to early church fathers, derivation of morality in God's majesty and holiness, and insistence that doctrine had to be taught¹⁸ are indicators of this. In keeping with all of this, Oporin "refused to classify himself" as belonging to either the orthodox or pietist camps. He "hated the misuse of the appropriate classification between pietism and orthodoxy" and rather characterized himself "as one who represented a moderate theology insisting upon unity in necessary matters but allowing variation in unnecessary matters".¹⁹ In most respects, Muhlenberg mirrored his teacher in this same way.

16. Kenneth R. Lenz, Life and Theologie of Joachim Oporin, Professor and Teacher of Henry Melchior Mühlenberg, (ThD Thesis, Heidelberg University, 1970), p 177.

17. *ibid*, p 39.

18. *ibid*, p 179.

Oporin's aversion to what he considered the "misuse of the appropriate classification between pietism and orthodoxy" helps shed light on the report given at the first meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748 regarding "Why other so-called preachers...were not invited":

Mr. Muhlenberg shows that we can have no fellowship and close brotherhood with them for 1, they decry us as Pietists, without reason; 2, they have not been sent hither, have neither an inner nor an external call; 3, they are not willing to observe the same Church Order that we do; each wants to conform to the ceremonies of his home; 4, six years' experience has taught Mr. Muhlenberg that they care for nothing but their bread; 5, they are under no Consistorium, and give no account of their official doings.²⁰

No doubt, Muhlenberg, like his teacher, did not consider himself a "true pietist" in keeping with Oporin's feelings regarding the "appropriate classification" of pietists. Muhlenberg shared his teacher's theology with its emphases on conversion, repentance, accomodation, and so forth.²¹ He also shared in Oporin's orthodox "elements." It is, therefore, only natural that he did not look upon himself as a representative of ^{'true'} pietism, despite his Halle connections.

However, Muhlenberg had other reasons for disavowing and avoiding the name "pietist." For one thing, the name "pietist" was already an umbrella term covering a multitude of various emphases and personalities. F. Ernst Stoeffler makes

20. Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) p 11.

21. R.F. Scholz, op cit, pp 56-58

the comment that "already in August Hermann Francke's time his orthodox opponents lumped together a number of related religious developments under the umbrella of Pietism. This was done much to the chagrin of Francke and the theologians of Halle."²² During the 1760 Ministerium meeting, it was reported to Muhlenberg:

...for several years rumors were spread and kept up among the people in the country to the effect that the preachers sent from Halle are Pietists, secret Zinzendorfers, heretics, no true Lutherans, but seducers and dangerous people, etc.²³

While in Friesburg, New Jersey on Reformation Day, 1765, Muhlenberg recorded in his Journals that "certain men were now trying to make the people believe that I and my colleagues (in the Ministerium) were nothing but Pietists, Herrnhuters, etc."²⁴

While most of these accusations came from the ranks of pretenders and self-appointed preachers,²⁵ Muhlenberg and the members of the Ministerium also received criticism from Rev. W.C. Berkenmeyer, a man whose call and orthodoxy were unquestionable. Berkenmeyer referred to pietism as a "plague" that showed "a real distaste for orthodox truth."²⁶

22. F. Ernst Stoeffler, Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p 8.

23. Journals, vol 1, p446.

24. *ibid*, vol 2, p 284.

25. Stoeffler, *op cit*, p 18.

26. Simon Hart, Julius Kreider, trsls., Protocol of the Lutheran Church in New York City, 1702-1750., (United Synod of New York and New England, copyrighted 1958) p 185.

When, after signing in 1746 Berkenmeyer's General Church Order, a document which included an article banning "all conventicles and secret meetings"²⁷, Halle-trained John C. Hartwick served the Ministerium's parishes at Philadelphia and Germantown²⁸ while the resident pastor was ill, Berkenmeyer became "very angry." Muhlenberg reports:

Pastor Berckenmeyer, (sic) as an old guardian and champion of liturgical forms and opponent of the power of godliness, had been very angry from the very beginning when he learned that the preacher assigned to him had come to Pennsylvania first and was acquainted with us. His premises were fixed beforehand: whoever has acquaintanceship with the Pietists is a Pietist; therefore Mr. Hartwich (sic) is a Pietist.²⁹

In the ensuing controversy, Berkenmeyer wrote several tracts against Hartwig accusing him of Herrnhutism.³⁰

Such things were troublesome to Muhlenberg because of the impact they had on the common people who, although largely ignorant of the theological issues involved, were sensitive to the pejorative connotations of being a "pietist." Thus, Muhlenberg and his colleagues were anxious to avoid such titles and defended themselves against them.

27. Karl Kretzmann, "The Constitution of the First Lutheran Synod in America," CHIQ, 1935, vol 8, p 6.

28. H. Julius Kreider, Lutheranism in Colonial New York, (New York: Arno Press, 1972) p 108; Hallesche Nachrichten, (Allentown: Brobst, Diehl & Co., 1886) vol 1, p 361.

29. Journals, vol 1, pp 248-249.

30. ibid, vol 1, p 249; John P. Dern, ed., Albany Protocol, (Monocacy Book Co, 1971) pp xlv-xlvi.

While still in Germany, Muhlenberg took no such pains. In connection with a sermon preached February 25, 1742, (shortly before coming to America) Muhlenberg noted:

OCULI SUNDAY: Preached on the proper Gospel, Luke 11...The Word of the Gospel exhibited its usual power in that it went to the hearts of several and impelled them to inquire after their salvation, but to others who were under great, blind prejudices concerning Pietism it was an offense, so that they sought an opportunity to insult me.³¹

While in Germany Muhlenberg may also have been the author of a pamphlet written against one Balthasar Mentzer, a critic of pietism. The pamphlet, authored by "D.M.", was a defense of pietism and its practices. It reportedly caused some stir. Critics of the pamphlet surmised the author to be "Diaconus Muhlenberg" who was then serving in Grosshennersdorf. Muhlenberg, it appears, never denied the charge.³²

Indeed, Muhlenberg was an outspoken opponent of orthodoxy his whole life. He viewed orthodox teaching as being mere shells. He once remarked in connection with I Corinthians 1:12:

The Pauline party has some similarity to a large group of our Lutherans after the blessed Reformation of Luther. Luther devoted all his God-given gifts, grace, and powers of body and soul to re-discovering and bringing to light, like a lost coin in the dust, the foundation of salvation, the gem of the Christian religion, in particular the article

31. Journals, vol 1, p 12.

32. W.J. Mann, op cit, pp 25, 26; Bente, op cit, vol 1, p 74.

concerning the justification of the poor sinner in the sight of God. But, God help us, what miscarriages has not our church had since that day! Scholars, who called themselves Lutheran and orthodox, made a shibboleth of the article of justification and a shibboleth of the article of sanctification, and persecuted, damned, and made heretics of many thousands of genuine Christians who refused to put asunder what Christ, Paul and Luther had joined together! We have only to look, not through the contents, but merely at the quantity of the great piles of polemical writings...which were poured out against such saintly teachers as Johann Arnd (sic), Henrich Müller, Spener, Francke, etc., because these men wanted to build upon the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones.³³

He also commented along these same lines:

The kernel of the sainted Luther's teaching is unknown in many parts of the Evangelical Church, and is mutilated in practice. If Luther himself reappeared, without being recognized, and began to teach in many places as he once taught in the symbolical books...he would be denounced as a Pietist and Enthusiast and chased to his fellows in hell.³⁴

These words clearly reveal Muhlenberg's orientation in regards to both orthodoxy and pietism.

While Muhlenberg avoided the title "pietist" for practical considerations in America, he nonetheless exhibited his pietism in his sermons and dealings with others:

In the afternoon I was obliged to hold an English service because of the great many English and Dutch people who had assembled. By God's grace I laid

33. Journals, vol 2, pp 132-133.

34. ibid, vol 1, p 382.

the emphasis on true repentance, living faith,
and godliness.³⁵

In a section of Muhlenberg's Journals entitled, "An Orthodox Lutheran gets religion" by the translator, Muhlenberg wrote,

He was known at first as a so-called zealous Lutheran. He considered merriment, buffoonery, the customary dances of the world, and so-called Christian drinking parties on special occasions as permissable adiaphora.³⁶

Muhlenberg also once said of another aged Lutheran, "he wanted to be saved by grace but expected to see God without sanctification." Similarly, he castigated his maid for being invited "to attend a frolick in the neighborhood tomorrow evening, where cornhusking will be rewarded with drink, games, and dancing" and criticized his daughter-in-law for having a^{tea-}party "not according to the counsel and command of our Lord and Saviour, Luke 14:12-14!"³⁷

Muhlenberg reported once to Halle early in his ministry, "The tosspots are accustomed to say, 'Since we have to hire a preacher for money, let's have a jolly one, for this Muhlenberg is too strict for us.'"³⁸

Muhlenberg was fond of concluding a remark regarding the "marriage" of justification and sanctification by saying, "What God therefore hath joined together, let not man put asunder."³⁹ In many ways this epitomizes the basic flaw

35. Journals, vol 1, p 360.

36. *ibid*, vol 1, p 382; Stoeffler, *op cit*, p 19.

37. *ibid*, vol 1, p 326; vol 3 pp 619, 746.

38. *ibid*, vol 1, p 97.

39. *ibid*. vol 1. p 382.

of Muhlenberg's "working theology" from the orthodox point of view: the failure (and disregard) to properly distinguish between justification and sanctification. His preference for the umbrella term "true repentance" is symptomatic of this basic, pietistic failure. Muhlenberg viewed the distinction as dangerous and un-Lutheran.⁴⁰ He complained when a parishioner criticized that he "had declared several points to be necessary to true Christianity which, in his opinion, were not necessary":

These poor souls have been lulled and consoled for so many years with opus operatum that they consider a two-hour service in church on Sunday as quite sufficient for justification.⁴¹

"Opus operatum" was Muhlenberg's characterization and caricature of orthodoxy's emphasis upon justification by grace, an emphasis Muhlenberg charged had "made a shibboleth of justification."⁴² Yet the Formula of Concord, to which Muhlenberg claimed adherence⁴³ declares:

In the words of the Apology, this article of justification by faith is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," "without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." In this same vein Dr. Luther declared: "Where this single article remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit. (FC, ThD, III:6 - Tappert)

40. *ibid*, vol 2, pp 132-133.

41. *ibid*, vol 1, p 278.

42. *ibid*, vol 2, p 132

43. C. Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) p 64; Bente, *op cit*, vol 1, p 70.

In this regard, Scholz declares:

There was a second difference between Muhlenberg and Lutheran orthodoxy as he understood it. Whereas the orthodox Berkenmeyer could be said to follow the Formula's emphasis on the "righteousness of faith" as the result of a forensic act of pronouncing "free from sin," Muhlenberg understood righteousness more broadly to mean that God pronounced and made righteous. Here Muhlenberg agreed with the Apology's broader definition of righteousness or justification, as including both regeneratio and vivificatio.⁴⁴

One must wonder, if Scholz is correct in his analysis, what Muhlenberg (and any Lutheran espousing such a point of view) does with the Formula statement:

We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Scripture the word "justify" means in this article "absolve," that is, pronounce free from sin.Sometimes, as in the Apology, the words regeneratio and vivificatio are used in place of justification, and they mean the same thing (!), even though otherwise these terms refer to the renovation of man and distinguish it from justification by faith. (FC, Ep, III: 7,8 - Tappert)

There can be little doubt that the Formula places such a misinterpretation of the Apology out of line with confessional Lutheranism.

The preceding raises another issue, that of Muhlenberg's confessional stance. Theodore Tappert wrote of the pietists in colonial America:

At the outset it is well to underscore the fact

44. R.F. Scholz, op cit, p 62.

that these people regarded themselves as Lutheran.
...Official documents uniformly committed ministers
and congregations to the Lutheran confessions or
standards of faith.⁴⁵

Thus, Peter Brunnholtz, Muhlenberg's colleague and first
"superintendent" of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, vowed
to abide "by the pure and unadulterated Word of God,....
the three chief Symbols...and especially also in the true
Lutheran church-books, as the Unaltered Augsburg Confes-
sion, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the two Cate-
chisms of Luther, and in the specific (Epitome?) Formula
of Concord".⁴⁶ Similarly, Muhlenberg himself declared:

I herewith challenge Satan and all his servile,
lying spirits to prove against me the least
point that would be repugnant to the teachings
of the apostles and prophets and our symboli-
cal writings...Again and again I have stated
orally and in writing that...in our Confessions
I discover no error, blemish, or defect.⁴⁷

W.J. Mann considered Muhlenberg's orthodoxy in regard to
the Confessions "iron-clad" because of his ordination
certificate.⁴⁸ However, F. Bente comments that Muhlen-
berg's confessionalism did not represent the "genuine
Lutheranism of Luther, but the modified Lutheranism...(of)
Halle and the...Pietists."⁴⁹ Muhlenberg's confessional
stance is rather "of the historic kind," of reverence,
but not of total adherence.

45. Stoeffler, op cit, p 21.

46. Bente, op cit, vol 1, p 72.

47. Nelson, op cit, p 64.

48. Scholz, op cit, p 54; Journals, vol 1, p 5.

49. Bente, op cit, vol 1, p 73.

Muhlenberg's unionism is a practical example of his confessional commitment. As was noted at the outset, pietism was not a restricted movement. Rather, its fundamental thrusts were felt throughout Protestantism as well as Lutheranism. Indeed, this is one of the major difficulties in defining "pietism:" "Like all such movements (e.g., Puritanism) pietism has produced a variety of form and expression, yet it can be recognized as historically distinct from other movements within Protestantism."⁵⁰ Yet although it is difficult to distinguish and to define precisely one "brand" of pietism (or pietist) from another, this very fact gave pietism a transcendent quality that all pietists recognized and treasured. Muhlenberg shared this appreciation and evidenced it by his fraternal and fraternizing ways. Thus, in May of 1752, Muhlenberg relates of his intercourse with a group of "the awakened" of the Reformed pietists.⁵¹ Thus, in January of 1743, Muhlenberg gave his approval of a Reformed suggestion to build a joint church so long as "if they wanted half the equity, they must also pay half the costs."⁵² Thus, in August of 1760, Muhlenberg wrote approvingly of the sermon delivered by Episcopalian Richard Peters, a sermon "preached very soundly and edifyingly in English before a large assembly."⁵³ However, the most striking example of Muhlenberg's unconfessional unionism is his relationship with George Whitefield, the famous preacher of the Awakening.

50. Stoeffler, op cit, p 9.

51. Journals, vol 1, pp 324-325; Bente, op cit, p 84ff.

52. *ibid*, vol 1, p 86.

53. *ibid*, vol 1, p 431.

The 1763 meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium was held in Philadelphia in October. Whitefield, who was also visiting Philadelphia at the time, was invited by the synod to be present at an examination of St. Michael's children. The invitation was accepted "and though in feeble health, (Whitefield) ascended the pulpit, prayed, and addressed the children, and gave also to the parents words of admonition."⁵⁴ In 1769 Whitefield was invited to preach at Zion congregation. W.J. Mann comments:

In our times we think it strange that Whitefield, as we narrated, was invited to participate in the services and the exercises of the Lutheran congregation...

But, he explains,

It was a view rather common in those days that the doctrinal distinctions...were of no great account. ...Muhlenberg's pietism also, which he had inherited from Halle, brought him into a certain affinity with all those in whom he noticed the symptoms of a living, personal spirituality...⁵⁵

Thus, Muhlenberg himself was also invited and preached at various times in Episcopalian churches.⁵⁶

* * * * *

Wasn't Muhlenberg a pietist? Is the "charge" unfair in the light of his acts, words, and confessional position? Does the term "pietism" "obscure" a true picture of the "Patriarch"? Far from obscuring, the term correctly and properly identifies Muhlenberg with a movement that was

54. W.J. Mann, op cit, pp 388-389; Journals, vol 1, p 688.

55. ibid, pp 390-391.

56. Bente, op cit, pp 84-89.

dear to him in its emphases. Actually, it would be not only inaccurate, but also a bit of historical injustice to view him otherwise. But ^{more importantly,} the characterization "pietist" should not be discarded in Muhlenberg's case lest the sad consequences related to the pietist mentality—consequences that surfaced in the eastern synods immediately after Muhlenberg—be disregarded as a result.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg is a key figure in American Lutheran History; he deserves his qualified epithet. But, with Bente, confessional Lutherans cannot agree with W.J. Mann and A. Spaeth when they say:

Sooner or later the whole Lutheran Church of America should and could unite on the position of Muhlenberg.

Rather:

We would not detract from the merit of Muhlenberg. The slogan of the American Lutheran Church, however, dare never be: "Back to Muhlenberg!" "Back to Halle!" but "Back to Wittenberg!" "Back to Luther! Back to Lutheran sincerity, determination, and consistency both in doctrine and practice!"⁵⁷

57. Bente, op cit, vol 1, p 91.

14. Weiser, Frederick S. "The 'Muhlenberg Way'" Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly. 1961 , vol 34, p 45.
15. Wolf, Richard C. Documents of Lutheran Unity in America. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.

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