

Henry Muhlenberg

Pastoral Letter



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Pastoral Letter of Henry Muhlenberg

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Pastoral Letter of Henry Muhlenberg

By Henry Melchior Muhlenberg

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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Pastoral Letter Of Henry Muhlenberg

The following translation of a manuscript letter of the venerable Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America, will constitute an acceptable addition to the valuable biographies which precede it. Its historic is not its only interest. Exhibiting the spirit in which the Fathers of our church labored, it furnishes useful lessons to the sons. *O si sic omnes!* Editor.

In the name of God! — Amen!

Co-laborer Schaum and beloved brother in Christ:—

We are compelled to send you to Raritan, and to recall our dear brother Kurtz. Inasmuch as Raritan is one of those posts in which it is necessary to ask from God, and use all possible wisdom and prudence, if we do not wish our church to be injured, we send with you the following instructions, dictated by genuine and disinterested affection:

[1] You go forth in the capacity of a Diaconus, or servant of Christ. Permit us, therefore, earnestly to recommend for your study and assimilation into *succum* and *sanguinem*, the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and show yourself to be really such an one, in doctrine and life, in prayer, self-denial and watchfulness.

[2] In your external conduct, be thoughtful and circumspect, in every relation; in conversation, in preaching and other official duties, inasmuch as you have persons gazing upon you from all sides. Should you offend in doctrine, or life, or in the discharge of your official duties, the report of it would be heard in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, as well as Holland and Germany, and we ourselves, and our worthy superintendents, be deeply grieved. *Lupus enim in fabula.*

[3] We request you to keep an accurate and continuous journal, during your absence, of the occurrences of each day, and of your official acts, and to present it to us on your return; and occasionally, in the interval, when fa-

avorable opportunities offer from Raritan, to send us a written account of your circumstances.

[4] Observe unalterably the following method in the discharge of the official duties:

[a] In public worship, begin with our usual Confession. Take nothing from it, add nothing thereto.

[b] Let the congregation then sing:— ¹

Allein Gott in der Höh'; or,
Nun bitten wir den Heil'gen Geist.

[c] Offer up the petition: Schaff' in uns Gott ein reines Herz,² or some other short scriptural prayer; afterwards read the Epistle.

[d] Give out the principal hymn, selecting such as are well known, and tunes with which the congregation are familiar, otherwise confusion will arise.

[e] Read the Gospel, and repeat the Creed without explanation.

[f] The congregation then can sing: —

Liebster Jesu sq., or
Herr Jesu Christ dich zu sq.

During the singing of the hymn, go upon the pulpit. With reference to the preaching, be pleased —

[i.] Not to make use of any long original prayers, as introductory to your discourse, for they give rise to repetitions, consume time, and distract the attention.

[ii.] You should have the discourse well and completely committed to memory, and entirely at your command, so that you may be able to deliver it deliberately, without stammering, and without the repetition of the same words. Do not forget, deliberately, and in the affectionate intonations of a loving pastor.

[iii.] The sermon ought, and must not be longer than a half an hour, as in addition to this, the prayers consume some time. You can determine the time by your watch.

[iv.] After the sermon is ended, read the Liturgy with a deliberate enunciation, and do not forget to pray for our gracious Majesty, George the 2nd.

[v.] After the close of the services, call up the youth of your charge, and each time allow them to recite one of the divisions of Luther's Catechism, and also our Glaubens-Lied.³ This instruction of the children should not last more than half an hour.

[vi.] We give you authority to baptize children in the congregation, when it is desired. You must not, however, perform the baptismal ceremony, in words suggested at the time, but proceed strictly in accordance with our Agenda, except that you may omit the Exorcism, or the abjuration of evil spirits.

[vii.] When persons desire the publication of the bans, and to be united in marriage, you must first inquire of the deacons and elders, whether the applicants belong to the congregation; and not perform the ceremony, until the publication has been made, with the consent of the deacons, for three successive Sundays, and no objections have been presented.

[viii.] It will be your chief and most necessary duty, each succeeding week, to instruct the children of the congregation; for this is a matter of great importance, and is pleasing to the congregation.

[ix.] Seriously beware of land speculations, secret marriage engagements, the purchase of horses, watches, and of exchanging of any kind. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life do not slumber; and it is a shame when we youthful heroes fall before such enemies.

[x.] In conversation with others, it is more necessary to converse about our spiritual warfare, spiritual enemies and conflicts, than about worldly affairs; for we do not understand, *Corpus politicum*, therefore it is true here also: *Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses*. May we only be good combatants for Jesus Christ.

[xi.] We cannot yet determine absolutely, when you shall return; we will therefore write when it is necessary.

We hope you will be a sweet savor, and a pattern to the Raritan people. The Lord our God prosper your way, and cause you to be a great blessing, whilst absent; and may you return again with a contented heart.

We commend you to God, and the word of his grace.

Written with the approbation of pastor PETER BRUNNHOLTZ, by

H. MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG.

PROVIDENCE, April 2, 1747.

1. "God Alone on High"; "Now We Ask The Holy Spirit."↵
2. "Create in us a Pure Heart."↵
3. "Faith Song"↵

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

Basic Biblical Christianity | Books to Download

- [*The Small Catechism of Martin Luther*](#)

The essentials of faith have remained the same for 2000 years. They are summarized in (1) The Ten Commandments, (2) The Lord's Prayer, and (3) The Apostles' Creed. Familiarity with each offers great protection against fads and falsehoods.

- [*The Way Made Plain by Simon Peter Long*](#)

A series of lectures by the beloved Twentieth Century American pastor on the basis of faith.

- [*Bible Teachings by Joseph Stump*](#)

A primer on the faith intended for new believers. Rich in Scripture. Christian basics explained from Scripture in clear and jargon-free language. Many excellent Bible studies can be made from this book.

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Essential Theology | Books to Download

- [*The Augsburg Confession: An Introduction To Its Study And An Exposition Of Its Contents by Matthias Loy*](#)

“Sincere believers of the truth revealed in Christ for man's salvation have no reason to be ashamed of Luther, whom God sent to bring again to His people the precious truth in Jesus and whose heroic contention for the faith once delivered to the saints led to the establishment of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, now generally called the Evangelical Lutheran Church.”

- [*The Doctrine of Justification by Matthias Loy*](#)

“Human reason and inclination are always in their natural state averse to the doctrine of Justification by faith. Hence it is no wonder that earth and hell combine in persistent efforts to banish it from the Church and from the world.”

- [*The Confessional Principle* by Theodore Schmauk](#)

Theodore Schmauk's exploration and defense of the Christian faith consists of five parts: Historical Introduction; Part 1: Are Confessions Necessary?; Part 2: Confessions in the Church; Part 3: Lutheran Confessions; and Part 4: The Church in America.

- [*Summary of the Christian Faith* by Henry Eyster Jacobs](#)

A Summary of the Christian Faith has been appreciated by Christians since its original publication for its easy to use question and answer format, its clear organization, and its coverage of all the essentials of the Christian faith. Two essays on election and predestination are included, including Luther's "Speculations Concerning Predestination".

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Devotional Classics | Books to Download

- [*Sermons on the Gospels* by Matthias Loy](#) and [*Sermons on the Epistles* by Matthias Loy](#)

"When you feel your burden of sin weighing heavily upon you, only go to Him... Only those who will not acknowledge their sin and feel no need of a Savior — only these are rejected. And these are not rejected because the Lord has no pity on them and no desire to deliver them from their wretchedness, but only because they will not come to Him that they might have life. They reject Him, and therefore stand rejected. But those who come to Him, poor and needy and helpless, but trusting in His mercy, He will receive, to comfort and to save."

- [*The Great Gospel* by Simon Peter Long](#) and [*The Eternal Epistle* by Simon Peter Long](#)

“I want you to understand that I have never preached opinions from this pulpit; it is not a question of opinion; I have absolutely no right to stand here and give you my opinion, for it is not worth any more than yours; we do not come to church to get opinions; I claim that I can back up every sermon I have preached, with the Word of God, and it is not my opinion nor yours, it is the eternal Word of God, and you will find it so on the Judgment day. I have nothing to take back, and I never will; God does not want me to.”

- *True Christianity* by John Arndt
- *The Sermons of Theophilus Stork: A Devotional Treasure*

“There are many of us who believe; we are convinced; but our souls do not take fire at contact with the truth. Happy he who not only believes, but believes with fire... This energy of belief, this ardor of conviction, made the commonplaces of the Gospel, the old, old story, seem in his [Stork’s] utterance something fresh and irresistibly attractive. Men listened to old truths from his lips as though they were a new revelation. They were new, for they came out of a heart that new coined them and stamped its own impress of vitality upon them as they passed through its experience...” – From the Introduction

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