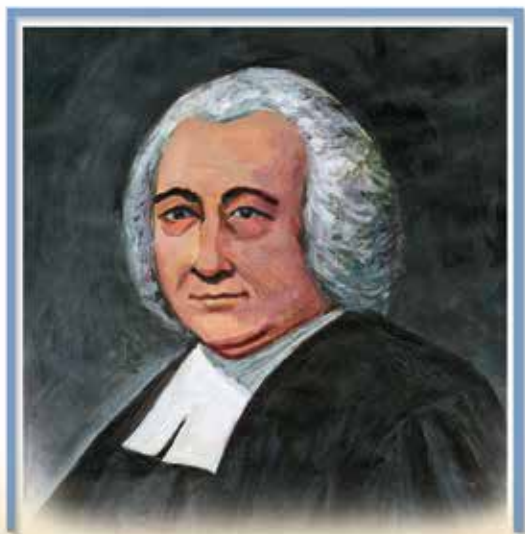


*Heinrich Melchior
Muhlenberg*
Hero of Faith



By Stephenie M. Hovland
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Henry Muhlenberg

He knew he must be strong for his family.





chapter one

Coping with Loss

Heinrich could almost smell the fresh, hot bread he knew his mother must be taking out of the oven. He hurried down the street to his eighteenth-century German home, almost running through the door. Mindful of the manners his parents had impressed upon him, he walked in the house quietly and closed the door behind him. The normal noise of a busy household was silenced. And there was no scent of fresh bread. The warmth of the house seemed to be gone. Heinrich knew something was wrong. What had happened?

“Heinrich, is that you?” his mother called from the kitchen. His mother’s voice was always strong and confident. Not that day. He could hear weakness and trembling. As he entered the kitchen, he heard someone sobbing. Nobody except children cried in the Muhlenberg house.

Heinrich saw some of the women from church comforting his mother. She held a handkerchief to her face, but Heinrich could see her puffy, glistening eyes ready to spill tears, as they must have been the whole time he was at school.

Mother looked at her friends, and they left the room and closed the door behind them. Heinrich stood in front of his mother, who stayed seated. She looked him in the eyes and said, “Heinrich, your father has passed.”

Heinrich looked at her, trying to understand. He knew what *passed* meant, but that word did not belong with his father, a strong, active man. Heinrich looked to the door, expecting his father to walk through and explain his mother’s confusion.

She held both of Heinrich’s hands and squeezed them. He looked into her eyes again.

“Heinrich, your father is dead,” she whispered. She pulled Heinrich close to embrace him. He sniffed and blinked. He knew he must be strong for his family.

Years later, people would say that if it weren’t for his father’s death, Heinrich might not have developed such a strong character. At the young age of 12, Heinrich wouldn’t have been forced to quit school and find a way to help financially support his family. He wouldn’t have had to go through his teen years without a father to guide him. He wouldn’t

have had to work long days in a physical job, reading books and studying God's Word only after all the chores were done. He wouldn't have needed to struggle so hard just to survive.

Although others might have bragged that they did it all themselves, Heinrich knew his strength came from the Lord. His self-reliance was anchored in God. His father would have been proud to see how Heinrich coped, adjusted, and moved forward after his death.

Heinrich knew his strength came from the Lord.

