HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG
by Charles Willson Peale
Courtesy of Charles H. Muhlenberg, Jr.

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIEW OF FEMININITY AS SEEN THROUGH THE JOURNALS OF HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG

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IN THEIR search for clues about the developing American concept of femininity, historians have failed to exploit fully the diaries left by clergymen, sources particularly valuable for eighteenth-century America.[1] Often quite influential, preachers had contacts with parishioners who approached them with problems ranging from the deeply philosophical to the superficial and mundane. Their perceptions and pronouncements thus provide revealing contrasts with the problems and preoccupations of their flocks. Within the diaries left by these men of God lie many hints about the nature of womanhood in their communities.

This study relies upon the journals left by a Lutheran clergyman in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.[2] Henry Melchior Muhlenberg was born in Einbeck, Germany, in 1711, and was educated at Halle University, the center of German pietism. He subsequently taught at the orphanage and supervised the infirmary at Halle before

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[1] Studies of eighteenth-century American women, still rare, include Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History* (Boston, 1970), ch. 3 and 4; Elizabeth A. Dexter, *Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America before 1776* (Boston, 1924); Julia C. Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill, 1938); Mary S. Benson, *Women in Eighteenth-Century America* (New York, 1935); Alice Morse Earle, *Colonial Dames and Goodwives* (Boston, 1895).

[2] *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1942-58). There is no up-to-date scholarly biography of Muhlenberg; William J. Mann, *The Life and Times of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* (Philadelphia, 1888), is too adulatory; William K. Frick, *Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia, 1902), is even less critical; Paul A. Wallace, *The Muhlenbergs of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1950), concentrates on action rather than on analysis.

receiving a call in 1741 from three Pennsylvania congregations—Philadelphia, Providence, and New Hanover.[3]

Muhlenberg's acceptance of the call to Pennsylvania was largely a response to the Great Awakening. Various sects, both English and German, which stressed the inner light, a personal religion, and the economies of dispensing with a trained and salaried ministry, had made massive inroads into the Lutheran congregations of the middle colonies. A dearth of clergymen of high moral character had prevented the Lutheran Church from making a vital response to the Great Awakening. The three congregations of Philadelphia, Providence, and New Hanover had been sending requests to Halle for a new minister since the 1730s. They wanted a pietistic brand of Lutheranism capable of meeting the challenge thrown out by such ministers as George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf. The uproar caused by the revivalism of the early 1740s finally prodded Halle into compliance with the Pennsylvania petitions.[4]

When Muhlenberg arrived in Pennsylvania in 1742, he found the three congregations in shambles and encountered opposition by the incumbent ministers, who were attempting to hold them together and to maintain their own precarious positions. He succeeded in assuming control not only of the Philadelphia, Providence, and New Hanover congregations but also ministering temporarily to various other parishes in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. By 1748 he had organized the forerunner of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and adjacent states. Muhlenberg, though no

[3] Providence, now known as Trappe, is in present-day Montgomery County, near Valley Forge; New Hanover, some nine miles to the north, was originally known as Falkner's Swamp. See William J. Buck, *History of Montgomery County within the Schuylkill Valley* (Norristown, 1859); Howard Wiegner Kriebel, *A Brief History of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania* (Norristown, 1923); Ernest T. Kretschmann, *The Old Trappe Church* (Philadelphia, 1893); "The Lutheran Church in New Hanover . . . ," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society*, XX (1911).

[4] Martin E. Lodge, "The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, The University of California at Berkeley, 1965), 39, 230, 257; Mann, *Life and Times of Henry Muhlenberg*, 111-12; *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 100, 365, 701; Richard C. Wolf, "The Americanization of the German Lutherans, 1683 to 1829" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1947), 7, 159-77; *Halle Reports: Report of the United German Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in North America, especially in Pennsylvania*, ed. by W. J. Mann and B. M. Schmucker, trans. by C. W. Schaeffer (Reading, 1882), 1, 13, 20, 50-51, 75-105.

great theologian, was thus the early consolidator of the Lutheran Church in the middle colonies.[5]

During the early years of his Pennsylvania ministry, Muhlenberg traveled extensively, recording details not only of his widespread institution-building jaunts but also of the more local concerns of parish life. From 1742 to 1761 his principal pastorates were those of the two rural congregations at Providence and New Hanover. He moved with his family in 1761 to Philadelphia, where he held the pulpit at St. Michaelis and Zion Church until his retirement in 1779. The last years of his life he spent on a farm in Providence. Muhlenberg's geographic mobility thus provided diverse material for his journals, most of which are extant for the years from 1742 to 1787.

Muhlenberg's journals are a useful source for the American concept of femininity. Sharing the influential position of clergymen in general, he characterized himself as playing many roles, ranging from that of a mother hen, to that (in a more despondent mood) of a privy into which Pennsylvanians unburdened themselves of their problems. He gave legal advice, ministered to the sick, wrote letters, provided marriage counseling, and saw himself as "not only shepherd and teacher, but often advocate, judge, physician, servant, and slave."[6] Since he wrote his journals partly as a report to his superiors at Halle, Muhlenberg's viewpoint was not merely idiosyncratic about femininity, but represented an important branch of European thought as it was transplanted to the New World.[7] His parishioners included, moreover, many ethnic elements of Pennsylvania's polyglot population—those of English, Scandinavian, and Dutch, as well as German, backgrounds.[8]

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg was a thirty-one-year-old bachelor when he arrived in Pennsylvania. Two and one-half years later, on April 23, 1745, he married Anna Maria, the seventeen-year-old daughter of the German-born Indian interpreter, Conrad Weiser. This marriage, a fruitful one, produced eleven children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. It ended only with Henry's death in 1787.[9]

[5] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 82; *Halle Reports*, 26; *Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States: Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748-1821* (Philadelphia, 1898), I, *passim;* Wolf, "The Americanization of the German Lutherans, 1683 to 1829," 225-53.

[6] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 190, 262, 354-55, 583-84, 709; II, 268; III, 73.

[7] *Ibid.*, I, xi.

[8] Wallace, *The Muhlenbergs of Pennsylvania, passim;* Mann, *Life and Times of Henry Muhlenberg, passim.*

[9] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 104n; Frick, *Henry Muhlenberg*, 195.

PASTOR MUHLENBERG HOLDING SERVICE IN THE BARN
Ernest T. Kretschmann, *The Old Trappe Church* (Philadelphia, 1893), 16.

Although his marriage seems to have been a successful one, Muhlenberg's diary conveys quite consistently the idea that marriage was at least for men inferior to the unwed state. "As to my marriage," he wrote in 1745, "it had always been my intention to remain single; but very likely the devil, in his cunning, tried to involve me in a *dilemma.*"[10] This dilemma was probably not a premarital pregnancy, since Anna Maria bore her first child, Peter, some seventeen months after the wedding.[11] Henry made no mention, either, of romantic love as his dilemma.

He stated, rather, two reasons for his marriage. The first was to salvage his reputation. In the course of duty he had to perform many delicate functions, such as visiting women in childbirth; he wed partly to quell the gossip that subsequently arose about him. As a married man, he would possibly seem less threatening to his feminine parishioners. And secondly, Muhlenberg needed a housekeeper. "I could not get along without some female servant. I could not and would not employ young girls, and old women require servants themselves . . . ." In choosing a wife, Muhlenberg reported, "I considered nothing but sincere piety, such as might be *convenable* both for myself and my work." While these words were intended for Halle and may mask more compelling and less rational reasons for his marriage, it is significant that Muhlenberg mentioned neither affection, nor companionship, nor even physical gratification as elements in his decision to marry and in his choice of a mate.[12]

Mühlenberg described Anna Maria as his ideal woman: "The Lord also regarded my prayers and granted me a young woman who is pure of heart, pious, simple-hearted, meek, and industrious."[13] This configuration coincides quite closely to the fourfold feminine ideal identified by Barbara Welter, in "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860."[14] Muhlenberg saw piety, submissiveness, purity, and domesticity as important womanly virtues, just as many nineteenth-century Americans did. He described several women who embodied some aspects of his ideal. For example: "From the bottom of her heart she hates all ungodliness and worldly lusts and

[10] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg,* I, 102. Muhlenberg often used words of a different language in his journals. The editors have indicated this practice through the use of italics; see I, xxiii.

[11] *Ibid.,* I, 104n; "The Trappe Records," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society,* VI (1896), 193.

[12] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg,* I, 102.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *American Quarterly,* XVIII (Summer, 1966), 152.

she devotes herself zealously to a life in this world that is sober, righteous, and godly." This is similar to the purity and piety pointed out by Welter. "She was industrious and a very excellent housekeeper." Domesticity is thus extolled in both centuries. "She is poor in spirit and has an excellent apprehension of the order of salvation." These traits embodied piety and submissiveness.[15]

Feminine industry seemed a key factor in the marriage choices not only of Muhlenberg, but of his colleagues as well. The Reverend Johann Friedrich Handschue wed his servant of three months for similar reasons, although another factor seems to have entered into the equation: In short, "This person had shapely limbs and comely appearance." Handschue, too, had intended never to marry, although he seems to have suffered a psychological barrier ("an abhorrence of the female sex"), which his maidservant helped him to overcome. He had hired her after a series of illnesses in which, "The married women were afraid and ashamed to nurse him or come near him and the men were not capable of giving the proper attendance and nursing care . . . . He lacked a competant housekeeper." Muhlenberg repeated in this theme of marriage as a compromising involvement his comments on the weddings of his co-workers, Jacob Loeser, and Mr. Vigera.[16]

Muhlenberg's views of marriage seem somewhat ambivalent. He cited, on the one hand, the classic Christian justification for that state: "The *finis primarius* of marriage is the propagation of the human race and the training of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the *finis secundarius* is that one should be the other's help, comfort, etc." Yet his support of the wedded state seems, on the other hand, at best a concession. Marriage, after all, could present real competition to piety. A frequent lament in Muhlenberg's journals is on the conflict of domestic and religious responsibilities. "Where," for example, "is one to find time for study? How can one understand his own household, when one has a wife, and uneducated children, and servants, and is seldom at home for one day?" On another occasion in 1751 after Henry had been called to minister for six months to a New York congregation, he agreed instead to the three-month limitation imposed by Anna Maria, again pregnant—for the fourth time in six years of marriage.

[15] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 130, 237, 508.
[16] *Ibid.*, I, 178, 219, 238, 239, 241.

"Alas," he mourned, "he that is unmarried can better care for the things that belong to the Lord . . . ."[17]

For a wife, marriage presented, according to Muhlenberg, dangers similar to those faced by her husband. Her responsibilities of marriage and parenthood could hinder devotion, as in the cases of Elisabeth Heilman and Anna Maria Krauss, both of whom Muhlenberg confirmed in 1747, despite their difficulties in finding time off from the care of children and households to come to catechism instruction. A woman from the mountains above New Hanover also expressed the difficulties involved for a young mother in finding occasion to pray: "She said that she was somewhat weak physically and always had a flock of children around her, so she sat in the forest alone . . . ."[18]

Piety, when coupled with submissiveness, might lead a woman to passive acceptance of her work load. When combined, however, within an individual feminine character, with industry, piety could lead to a religion-work conflict, just as it could for a man. Time spent caring for home and family was not likely to be time spent meditating, praying, or reading Arndt's *True Christianity*.[19]

But the danger posed for women by marriage was in another way radically different from that confronting men. A subtle misogyny seeps into Muhlenberg's journals, as, for example, when he cites Revelations and the allegorical whore of Babylon, alluding to a depraved *female* figure to show the perils facing the pious. For a man, there was possibly some *inherent* danger in his liaison with a woman. For a woman, on the other hand, the problem of matrimony lay not innately in the *sex* of her chosen one, but in the implicit possibility that this human would be a rival for "her soul's Bridegroom"—Christ.[20]

The husband could compete in various ways. First, his physical attraction could rival her spiritual affection. Muhlenberg described, for example, the state of Maria Kästner, whom he confirmed at the relatively advanced age of twenty-three. "She was betrothed, but

[17] *Ibid.*, I, 177, 274-75; III, 614.

[18] *Ibid.*, I, 143, 144-45, 147-48.

[19] Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*, the first book of which appeared in 1605, was widely read in Europe and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a devotional work, it took second place only to the Bible. F. Ernst Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden, 1971); *Studies in the History of Religion*, IX, 202-12. Muhlenberg recommended this tract and cited from it himself. See *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 132, 182; II, 379, 417; III, 186.

[20] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 145, 299, 366, 519, 666-667. Vern L. Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes toward Women* (Urbana, 1973), 97-120.

positively would not be married until she had first been married to Jesus."[21] As Muhlenberg saw it, the physical union must be preceded by the more important spiritual marriage.

Second, the possibility that God might be perceived as a substitute for a husband is implicit in the case of Maria Lewis, a daughter of Anabaptist parents. Recently widowed, this genteel Englishwoman had been frightened at the prospect of caring for a number of small children and an extensive household, including both black and white servants. She was awakened by the sermons of Muhlenberg, who baptized her in 1748. Perhaps psychologically incapable of existing independently, Lewis seems to have turned to religion in her sorrow.[22] Both of these Marias, Kästner and Lewis, suggest the possible interchangeability for women of God (a male, of course,) and husband.

Third, religion could be for husband and God, a subtle power struggle, with the prize being the wife's allegiance. In such a conflict, God would likely send a deputy, such as Muhlenberg, to do battle for Him. In an ideology in which the female becomes wed to Christ, the minister's role takes on a sexually ambiguous connotation. Muhlenberg told, for example, of a blind young woman who remained loyal to the Lutheran Church despite temptations from both Mennonites and Moravians. "An overwise Brother [a Moravian, or member of the United Brethren,] had said, among other things, that she was infatuated with Muhlenberg . . . ." Another virtuous woman he described as follows: "She has a proper, healthy taste for the Word of God and in her hunger she almost draws the words out of the preacher's mouth."[23] Muhlenberg provided accounts, moreover, of at least eight clergymen about whom rumors of transgressions against the sixth commandment circulated. They ranged from the 1745 slanders against his own person by a woman who later confessed that she had invented the story that Muhlenberg kept two whores in Philadelphia, to a third-hand innuendo about his rival, Count Zinzendorf, and Anna Nitzman, between whom the Indians had reported seeing "something that is not customary between brother and sister." When the alleged sinner was an enemy, Muhlenberg tended to believe the gossip; when a friend, he offered defenses, such as advanced age or good character.

[21] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 614.
[22] *Ibid.*, I, 208-10.
[23] *Ibid.*, I, 127-28, 129.

Whether such stories were true or not is probably irrelevant. What matters is the fact that they received such wide circulation and that Muhlenberg, himself no scandal-monger, chose to report them. Both he and the populace in general seem to have sensed something sexually suspicious about the preacher's role.[24]

Neither Muhlenberg nor his parishioners seem to have characterized religiosity as an *exclusively* feminine trait. The nurturing of piety in one's partner was a proper role for both man and woman. In one case, for example, Muhlenberg stated that a Mr. Rose "was bound to take care of his wife's eternal welfare." Elsewhere he described approvingly one aspect of the marital relationship of the ailing Hans Michael and his wife, Maria Margaretha, Krumrein: "She was really his pastor until he died." The nineteenth-century equation of femininity with religiosity, pointed out by Welter, does not seem evident among the ideals articulated by Muhlenberg.[25]

But the confirmation records of the towns of Providence and New Hanover do suggest a slight feminine connotation for religion. Each spring the Lutherans performed this rite upon those young people who had mastered the catechism. During the years 1743 to 1775 of the 1212 who were confirmed, 46 percent were male, 54 percent, female. Possible explanations for the higher percentage of women might include a high death rate among young boys or apprenticeship training which sent them to the city. Young women may have proven more apt students, reaching more easily the point at which the pastor felt them ready for the sacrament. Or parents may have sent their girls to instructions earlier and more regularly than their boys, since the typical female confirmed was fourteen, while her male counterpart was a year older.[26] On some level, parents, children, or preacher probably felt either that piety was slightly more appropriate for females than for males, or that training the young women to be religious would ensure norms of purity in the families they would subsequently establish.

[24] *Ibid.*, I, 96-97; see, too, I, 90, 105-107, 154, 242, 703; cf. Andre Bustanoby, "The Pastor and the Other Woman," *Christianity Today*, XVIII (August 30, 1974), 7-10.

[25] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 214, 359, 366, 519.

[26] "The Lutheran Church in New Hanover . . . ," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society*, XX (1911), "A List of the Catechumens . . . ," 345-91; "The Trappe Records," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society*, VII (1897), "Confirmations," 509-23. In some 200 cases for which age was given, the median and modal confirmation age was fourteen for females and fifteen for males.

Although he did not explicitly designate women as more religious than men, Muhlenberg certainly saw them as more emotional creatures. An outburst was not appropriate for men, as he told William Autenreith, who quite understandably broke down at the thought of his coming execution. "I told him that he was not of the *genus foeminum* but *masculinum* . . . ." While Muhlenberg was able to acknowledge the presence of high intelligence when he found it in a woman, within his ideological framework, it was typically subordinated to feminine emotionality. Women were more easily influenced by sweet words than by rational argument: "Poor womenfolk are easily caught with . . . fine Christian words and promises."[27]

Women had other flaws, too; chief among them was a tendency to gossip. He characterized, for example, tiresome rumors that he was trying to get a Mr. Schrenck to marry his sister-in-law, as "profane, old-womanish stories spun out of distaff philosophy . . . ." In reaction to rumors that Heinrich Keppele had defrauded the church of a large sum of money, Muhlenberg again rhetorically attributed the slander chiefly to women: "The man had heard that his wife had heard from another man's wife and from her neighbor . . . ." Clearly, women had loose tongues, and little good resulted from their chatting together.[28]

Although Muhlenberg did not state explicitly his views on human sexuality, he left clues which seem a prefiguration of Victorian prudery. He was admittedly a sensual man who could wax poetic over the sauerkraut served him on a 1774 trip to Charleston, South Carolina, whose warm climate made the preservation of this dish difficult. "As long as our rational soul is connected with a healthy body in possession of its organs of sense, it cannot be true." He argued, "that if a man would be a perfect Christian, he must bring self-denial to the point where he becomes indifferent alike to heat and cold and sour and sweet taste." Muhlenberg reacted differently, however, to feelings more frankly sexual. He justified, for example, his editing of a book of hymns in 1783: "I have also not included those which, inspired by the Song of Solomon, are composed too close to the verge of sensuality . . . ."[29]

Muhlenberg did not see women as either more or less sensual than

[27] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 150, 298, 354; II, 68-69.
[28] *Ibid.*, I, 409-10, 483; III, 746.
[29] *Ibid.*, II, 591; III, 524.

men. For both, sex could be a dangerous trap—one into which seemingly innocuous diversions could lead. Muhlenberg had been trained at Halle, whose brand of pietism distinguished as sinful certain practices not specifically forbidden by Christ and considered by other Lutherans as *adiaphora*, or *Mitteldinge*, morally neutral. Such a practice was dancing. Muhlenberg contrasted his own firm opposition to it to the attitudes of other clergymen. The Reformed (Calvinist) Pastor Böhm felt, for example, that "one cannot keep young people tied up in a sack, they must have their fun, and dancing has its place, too." Muhlenberg characterized his predecessor, Pastor John Conrad Andreae, as the approver and even instigator of this sensuality. "One can easily see," explained Muhlenberg, "how young minds are led astray, since even without encouragement the flesh is wont to gain the upper hand and the baser powers of the soul are all too ready to come to terms with any sensual feelings that are present." Dancing thus led to sexuality, and sexuality was potentially dangerous. Muhlenberg presented no arguments affirming even implicitly its beneficial aspects. Perhaps the roots of Victorian prudery lay in such ministers as Muhlenberg, rather than with the Puritans, whom Edmund S. Morgan has admirably absolved from guilt.[30]

When Muhlenberg did mention subjects of an intimate nature, he often used Latin abbreviations, or both. He noted casually, for example, in January of 1762, "Had a pleasant visit from Pastor Handschue and his wife. Late in the evening my wife became ill of *Nim[ia] flux[ia] mens[trualis].*" On another occasion he described the marital problems of his parishioners, the Kochs: "The woman became sickly *propter inveteratum mensium obstructionem* and was too *frigida* for his brutal nature." Muhlenberg, who had had some medical training at Halle, usually discussed intimate bodily functions in this pseudo-scientific way, and often in connection with malfunctions.[31]

While Muhlenberg recognized the existence of psychosomatic disorders, his conclusions about the relationship between body and mind were vastly different for the two sexes. He suffered from recurring depression. In one case, "I was striken with a mental sickness, which did not originate in the body . . . . Mental and spiritual ill-

[30] *Ibid.*, I, 137, 326n; Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex," *New England Quarterly*, 15 (December, 1942), 591-607.

[31] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 190, 354, 485; III, 21-22, 559.

nesses have a strong influence upon the body . . . ." He complained frequently of other illnesses, such as headaches, which could very well have been of a psychosomatic nature.[32]

Despite Muhlenberg's admission of his own mental problems and the citation of a very few cases of masculine hypochondria, the overwhelming majority of the cases he diagnosed as psychosomatic were those of women, many suffering diseases directly related to their sexual organs. For example, Muhlenberg discussed the wife of New York Reformed Pastor Goetschius:

> Several years ago she had been so frightened and overborne by the doctrine of absolute election that she fell into a severe illness . . . . God occasionally showed her a glimpse of grace, but it was never for long and then she had to walk in the valley of the shadows again.

This was an intelligent woman, whom Muhlenberg hoped was in a state of grace "and was only troubled by fancies owing to a hysterical illness." Analogous to Goetschius's case was that of a pious pregnant woman: "The mind is very apt to be dejected in this condition."[33]

In contrast to his evasion of any analysis of the nature of masculine psychosomatic ills, Muhlenberg groped toward an explanation of the relationship between the feminine body and soul. His conclusion seems to have been that women, while not overwhelmingly sexual when it came to the enjoyment of sex, were obviously sexual beings when something went wrong. Such diagnoses as *hysterici paroxismi, passio hysterica, epilepsia uterina, suffocatio uterina* occur frequently in his journals. In the eighteenth century, hysteria was considered as having its focus in the uterus and was often confused with epilepsy. Muhlenberg is thus no anomaly in his equation of the two illnesses. His wife, Anna Maria, suffered from a form of convulsions, although the exact nature of her illness is unclear. Muhlenberg used a variety of diagnostic terms, including *epi[lept[icus] paroxismus, e[pi]lepsia uterina,* and *passio hysterica.* To Muhlenberg, women were especially vulnerable to a complex of disorders, physical, mental, and spiritual. Of one woman who was having hysterical fits, he remarked: "What the *politici* call *passiones hystericae,* the Holy Scriptures call 'godly sorrow that worketh

[32] *Ibid.*, I, 339, 683; II, 25, 27, 36; III, 436.
[33] *Ibid.*, I, 133-34, 240, 298; II, 63, 76, 81.

repentance to salvation.'" In this strange confusion of mind, body, and soul, the configuration of the female was obviously very different from that of the male.[34]

Although he provided no complementary analysis of masculinity, Muhlenberg placed the *female* center of mind, body, and soul very specifically in the uterus. He described in some detail, for example, the case of Mrs. Setzler, the self-righteous mother of some of the founders of the congregation at Providence:

> Her condition was almost comparable to that of a garden in winter; on the surface it is white with snow and seems to be entirely free of weeds. But when the sun melts the snow and frost in spring and opens up the earth, the roots of the weeds are no longer hidden, but lie there in all their strength and sprout without cultivation.

The weed metaphor was nothing but a euphemism for adultery. As Muhlenberg discretely added in Latin, Mrs. Setzler had turned sometime ago to another man due to her husband's impotency. But God did not, according to Muhlenberg, abandon this woman:

> The merciful God in his wisdom took hold of her in the right spot, threw her upon a grievous sickbed, and for her own good kept her there for a full year in order that she might learn 'that by what things a man sinneth, by these he is punished' (Wisdom of Solomon, 11:17).

In case the "right spot" mentioned by Muhlenberg was not apparent, he clarified it: "Her uterus gradually became inflamed, then began to putrefy, and finally was consumed *minutatim*."[35]

If the above case was not convincing about the special significance attached by Muhlenberg to the feminine sexual organs, the following should provide an illuminating contrast. He told of a New Hanover widow suffering from an injury and consequent inflammation of her hand and arm which looked as if it might lead to gangrene. She wept bitterly because she had small children to care for. This widow regarded the accident in which she had injured herself as divine punishment for having used that very hand to mend her children's clothes on a Sunday. Muhlenberg was, however,

[34] *Ibid.*, I, 88, 123-25, 190, 223, 225, 416, 508, 560, 592; III, 276, 327, 341-342, 344, 347, 384, 387, 396, 400. See Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago, 1965), viii, ix, 141-144, 166, 167n, 170, 172, 184.

[35] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 351.

properly consoling: "I told her that the hand was only an instrument which worked or did not work according to the thoughts and decisions of the mind and will." In other words, when the trangressing member was a hand, it did not become the focus of God's wrath; when, a sexual organ, it did.[36]

In addition to being a creature with an intellect subordinate to the emotions, a gossip deficient in rational powers of judgment, and a being with an implicit sexual relationship to God and preacher, woman emerges from Muhlenberg's schema with their locus of mind, body, and soul in the womb. For such a being, the cultivation of such virtues as piety, submissiveness, purity, and domesticity probably seemed safest.[37]

But did the actual roles played by women measure up to these ideals? Were they ideals which would enable women to perform the tasks assigned them by their society? Potential conflicts existed, such as discussed previously between piety and industry, or between piety and submission to a man.

Domesticity seems to have been a realistic ideal in this society. It was an area in which women achieved a certain expertise and an essential economic role. Muhlenberg praised Anna Maria, for instance, for being "after the manner of women . . . somewhat wiser [than he] in household matters . . . ." In the relatively primitive technological state of the eighteenth-century economy, care of a household was a demanding job. Anna Maria Muhlenberg had especially difficult responsibilities. During the early decades of their marriage, the pastor was often off visiting and organizing distant parishes. One example will suffice: "When I had to be away, owing to pastoral duties, the gracious God delivered my wife and granted us a healthy and well-formed son." While the Muhlenbergs' family life was hardly typical, this and other cases demonstrate the possibility that a woman in her husband's absence (due to business, desertion, or death) could be called upon to assume full command of a household.[38]

[36] *Ibid.*, I, 134-35.

[37] Cf. Ann Douglas Wood, " 'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI (January, 1973), 25-52; Charles Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America." *The Journal of American History*, LX (September, 1973), 332-56, Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman; Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America," *Social Research*, XXXIX (Winter, 1972), 652-78.

[38] *Journals of Henry Muhlenberg*, I, 116-118, 234, 261-62, 274.

Muhlenberg several times voiced complaints such as the following: "One can hardly manage one's own household if one has a wife, children, and servants and is seldom at home." Despite his extolling of the virtue of feminine industry, Muhlenberg obviously felt that the management of a household belonged in masculine hands. It seems somewhat strange that he could speak of women as "weaker vessels" when his own home was controlled for long periods by Anna Maria. He spoke scornfully of Johannes Heiser: "He was not the master in his own house, but was under the *direction* of his wife." Perhaps Muhlenberg subconsciously dreaded slipping into a similar position himself.[39]

Industry was a feminine ideal, but it was most often concentrated in domestic duties. Muhlenberg provided hardly any evidence of eighteenth-century career women. When he did, their careers were of the nature of that of the widow Schleydorn, "a sprightly woman . . . with many natural gifts," who had taken over her husband's sugar refinery upon his death. Schleydorn's case and others cited by Muhlenberg involved women whose male relatives had left them a trade or business. A sample of apprenticeship contracts for 1772 Philadelphia included, moreover, only 25 percent females. In contrast to the diversity of over sixty crafts for which male apprentices were trained, fifty-eight of the sixty-two young women in the sample were to be trained in housewifery. Eighteenth-century Pennsylvania society thus apparently viewed the home as the proper boundary for the industry of the ideal (and the real) woman.[40]

Similarly, if feminine piety was desirable, it did not extend to the decision-making process of church government. Although Muhlenberg permitted women to vote during a 1762 controversy over whether he should remain in the pulpit at Philadelphia's St. Michaelis and Zion Church, his usual procedure in all three congregations was to dismiss the women and children whenever important business was on the agenda.[41]

Thus of the womanly ideals which Muhlenberg expounded, only the negative virtues, such as purity and submissiveness, remained unchallenged. This society confined industry and piety, potentially positive and active virtues, to rather narrow spheres. At times,

[39] *Ibid.*, I, 211, 215.

[40] *Ibid.*, I, 439-41; "Records of Indentures . . . ," *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society*, XVI (1905); in 1772, 564 apprenticeship contracts were recorded; of the 496 specifying the trade to be taught, I sampled every other one.

[41] *Ibid.*, I, 515, 561, 565, 576, 577, 660.

however, necessity forced them to expand beyond conventional bounds, as in the absence of a husband, or when the female vote might affect an important congregational decision. Perhaps eighteenth-century Pennsylvanians ordinarily limited such virtues as industry and piety because, like Muhlenberg, they perceived woman as a dangerous creature, one in whom body, mind, and soul focused and fused in the womb.[42]

In this society poised at the edge of the wilderness, the fear of elemental forces of nature was perhaps analogous to fear of the female human being, whose earthiness seemed to require subordination to the more ordered, rational character attributed to the male. Europeans such as Muhlenberg, in their psychological and intellectual response to their new environment, may thus provide the historian with important clues about the very roots of American feminine ideals.

[42] Cf. Phillida Bunkle, "Sentimental Womanhood and Domestic Education, 1830-1870," *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV (Spring, 1974), 16, 27; Wood, " 'The Fashionable Diseases' "; Rosenberg and Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal."