

American Minute with Bill Federer John Peter Muhlenberg: Major-General, Congressman, Senator & Pastor; with his Pastor brother Frederick-First Speaker of U.S. House

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"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven," preached **Rev. John Peter Muhlenberg**, from the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1.

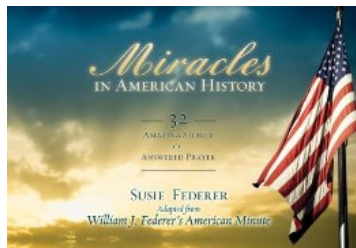
He closed his message by saying:

"In the language of the Holy Writ, there is a time for all things. There is a time to preach and a time to fight. And now is the time to fight"

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John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg was a 30 year old member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, who was also a pastor.

At the end of his sermon, January 21, 1776, **John Peter**

Muhlenberg threw off his clerical robes to reveal the uniform of an officer in the Continental Army.

Drums began to roll, men kissed their wives, and they walked down the aisle to enlist.

The next day, **Pastor Muhlenberg** led 300 men of his church and surrounding churches to join **General Washington's Continental Army** as the **8th Virginia Regiment**.

John Peter Muhlenberg was born OCTOBER 1, 1746, and he died the same day sixty-one years later, OCTOBER 1, 1807.

As a youth, he lived with relatives in Germany from 1763-1767: first in the city of Halle (Saale) in the southern part of the German state Saxony-Anhalt; then in the northern German port city of Lübeck in Schleswig-Holstein.

John Peter Muhlenberg served briefly in the German dragoons.

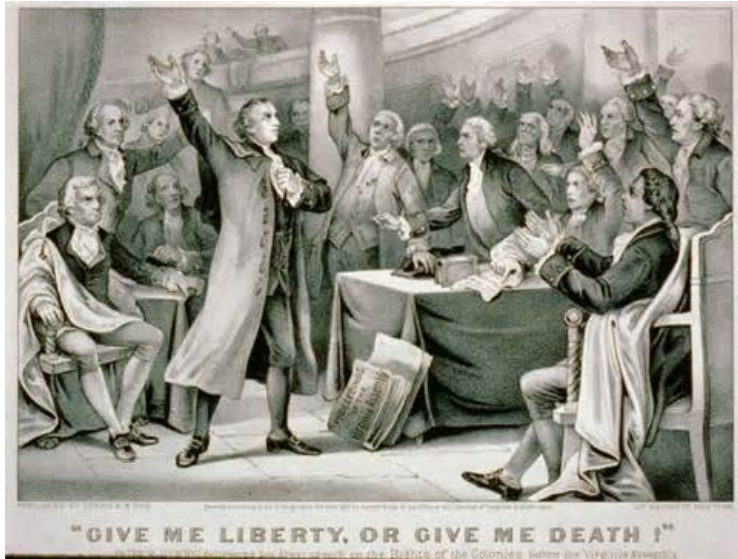
In 1767, he returned to America to finish his schooling at the **Academy of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania)**, which was founded by **Ben Franklin**, who helped build the school's first hall for **Evangelist George Whitefield** to preach in.

In 1772, **John Peter Muhlenberg** traveled to England where he was **ordained as a minister in the Anglican Church**, a necessary requirement for him to pastor the **Lutheran congregation** in Woodstock, Virginia, as

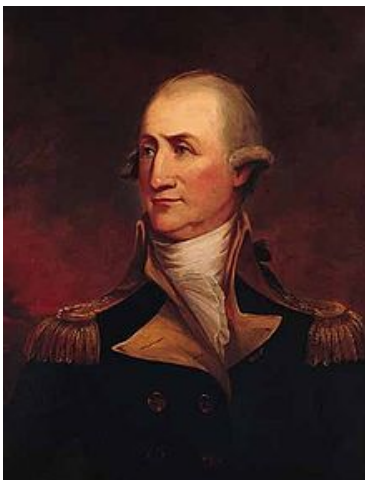
Virginia was established an Anglican colony.



In 1774, **Pastor John Peter Muhlenberg** was elected to the **Virginia House of Burgesses**. He served as a **delegate** to the **First Virginia Convention**.



He heard **Patrick Henry's** famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech in 1775, and was inspired to enlist.



General George Washington gave him the rank of Colonel and personally asked him to raise a regiment of soldiers.

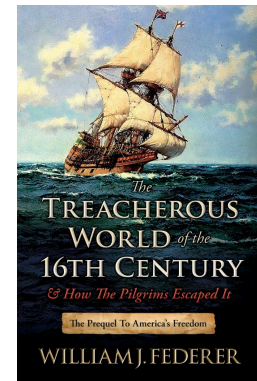
John Peter Muhlenberg and his men endured the freezing winter of **Valley Forge** and saw action at **Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and Stonypoint.**

He helped force **British General Cornwallis** to surrender at **Yorktown.**

By the end of the war **John Peter Muhlenberg** was promoted to the rank of **Major-General.**

In 1789, he was elected a **Representative** to the **first session** of the **U.S. Congress.**

[The Treacherous World of the 16th Century and How the Pilgrims Escaped It: The Prequel to America's Freedom](#)



John Peter's grandfather was **Conrad Weiser**, a pietist lay **German Lutheran minister** who was interpreter with the **Mohawk, Iroquois, Lenape-Delaware, and Shawnee** tribes.

Weiser served as the Indian interpreter for the pietist **Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf** when

he visited America in 1741, and founded **Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.**

Due to **Conrad Weiser's** peace-brokering, the **Iroquois** stayed allied with the **British** during the **French and Indian War**, which was critical to the survival of the **British colonies** in **America.**



John Peter's father was the pietist pastor **Henry Muhlenberg**, known as "**the Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America.**"

Pastors in America held one of **two** basic views.

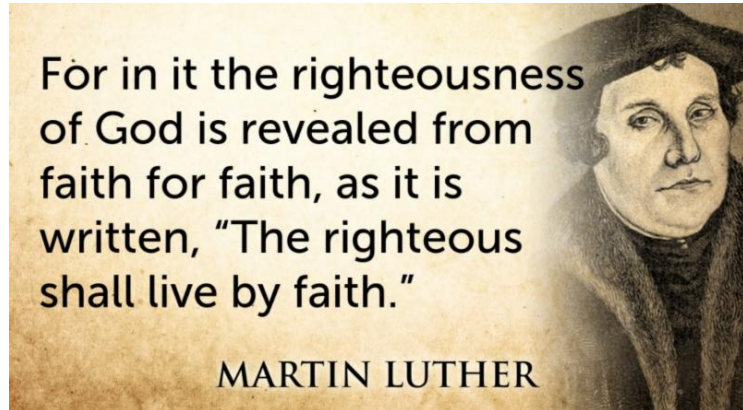
- The first was a **Calvinist Puritan view:** that God has

Colonial Pastors held two main views:

- 1) Calvinist Puritan**
- 2) Pietism**

a plan for your **life, marriage, family, employment, church, and government.** Believers are to find out what God's plan is and put it into effect.

- The second was a **Pietist view**, which emphasized a personal relationship with God and a separation from the sinful world.



When **Martin Luther** started the **Reformation**, he had an intensely **personal revelation** that **the just shall live by faith**, but when some German

kings wanted to break away from Rome, they made the impersonal decision for their entire kingdom that everyone had to be **Lutheran**.

To many individuals in these kingdoms, it was not a personal decision but rather an acknowledgment of a new set of state-approved doctrines.

So the revival movement of **pietism** began.

Pietism's view was that being a Christian was not just acknowledging a new set of doctrines, as



scriptural as those doctrines may be, but a **person also needed to have a personal experience with Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit**, and when they

did, their life should change.

They would **no longer** go to worldly **bars, brothels, lewd theaters**, or be **involved in worldly government**.

What? What was that last item?

Yes, government! **If someone was truly a Christian they would not be involved in government**, as it was filled full of selfish, ambitious, **worldly people**.

It was an early version of **separation of church and state**.

Some influenced by **pietism** would not even vote.

John Peter Muhlenberg had a **brother** would was a pietist Lutheran pastor, **Fredrick Augustus Muhlenberg**.



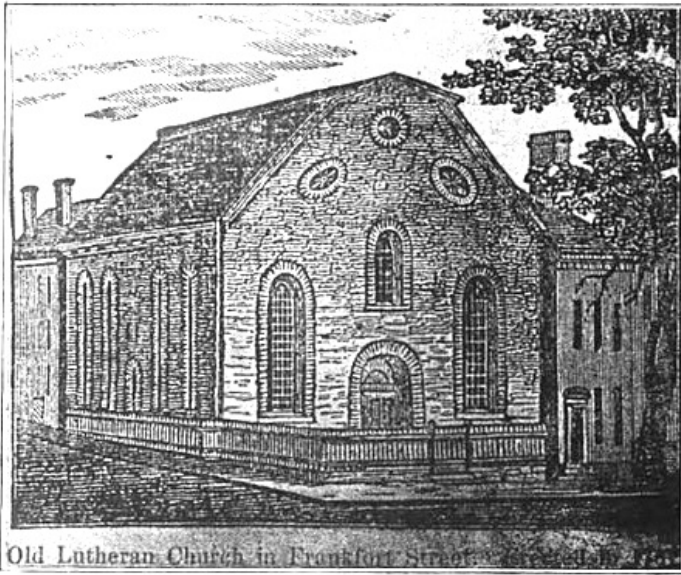
He was pastor of **Christ Lutheran Church** in **New York City**, nicknamed the "Old Swamp Church," which had branched off of one of the oldest Lutheran Churches in America.

The pietist **Frederick** opposed **John Peter's** involvement in politics, writing to him:

"You have become too involved in matters which, **as a preacher**, you have nothing whatsoever to do."

John Peter wrote back, accusing **Frederick** of being a **British Tory sympathizer**.

Frederick wrote back stating he could not serve two masters.



THE OLD SWAMP CHURCH

Then the **British** bombarded and invaded New York City following the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, and **Frederick Muhlenberg's church was burned**, forcing him and his family to flee the city.

After this, **Frederick** changed his mind and decided he should get involved.

He joined the patriotic cause and was elected as a **delegate** to the **Continental Congress** in 1779.

Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg was elected **Speaker of the Pennsylvania General Assembly**, 1780-1783, and presided over **Pennsylvania's Convention to Ratify the U.S. Constitution**.

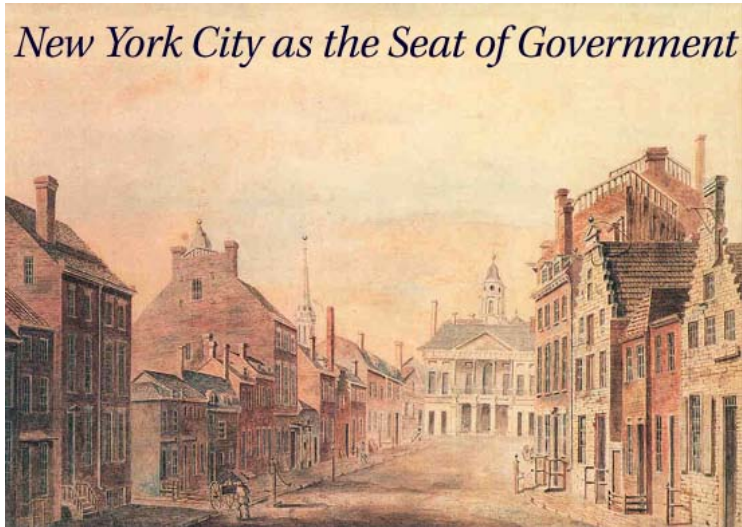
Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg was elected to the **U.S. Congress**, which met in New York City.

He was chosen to be the **first Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives**.



John and Frederick Muhlenberg, both ordained Lutheran pastors, served in the first session of Congress which passed the First Ten Amendments, called The Bill of Rights.

New York City as the Seat of Government



Does anybody honestly think that these two **Pastor-Congressman** would vote to outlaw themselves?

On the contrary,

Does anyone honestly think that these two pastors would vote to outlaw themselves?



their involvement, being both **anti-Federalists**, underscored the fact that the **First Amendment** was not keep people of faith out of government.

Instead, the **First Amendment**, as well as the **first Ten Amendments**, were meant to be **handcuffs on the power of the Federal Government**, as stated in the **Preamble to the Bill of Rights**:



"... **the States**, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to **prevent** misconstruction or **abuse of its powers**, that further declaratory and **restrictive clauses** should be added."

The **Bill of Rights** limited the **Federal Government's power**.

In other words, if the subject of religion came

before the **U.S. Congress**, the **Supreme Court** or the **President**, their response was to be **"hands off - religion is under each individual state's jurisdiction."**

Limited Government AND THE Bill of Rights

The **Federal Government** was **limited** from "prohibiting the free exercise" of religion as well as from taking away from the states and individuals the **freedom of speech, press, right to peaceably to assemble, or petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**



Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story wrote in *A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States*, 1840:

"The real object of the First Amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance **Mohammedanism, or Judaism, or infidelity**, by prostrating **Christianity**, but to **exclude all rivalry among Christian sects** and to prevent any national

ecclesiastical establishment which should give to a hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government."

Justice Samuel Chase

wrote in Maryland Supreme Court case of *Runkel v. Winemiller*, 1799:

"By our form of government, the **Christian religion is the established religion; and all sects and denominations of Christians are placed upon the same equal footing, and are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty.**"



John Peter Muhlenberg served on **Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council** in 1784, and in 1787 he was elected **Vice-President (Lieutenant-Governor)** of Pennsylvania.

In 1790, **John Peter Muhlenberg** was a member of the **Pennsylvania's State Constitutional Convention**.

Being an **anti-Federalist**, he founded some of the **first Democratic-Republican Societies** in 1793.

John Peter Muhlenberg served as a Trustee of the **University of Pennsylvania**, his alma mater.

In 1801, he was elected a **U.S. Senator**.

He was also appointed by **President Thomas Jefferson** as Supervisor of Revenue for Pennsylvania, 1801, and Customs Collector for Philadelphia, 1802.

His statue is in front of the **Shenendoah County Courthouse** in Woodstock, Virginia.

A memorial to **John Peter Muhlenberg** stands behind the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**.

Muhlenberg, Kentucky, and Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, are named for him.

In Washington, D.C., at the corner of Connecticut Ave. and Ellicott St., there is a bronze memorial to **John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg**, with the inscription:

JOHN PETER GABRIEL MUHLENBERG

1746-1807

SERVING

HIS CHURCH

HIS COUNTRY

HIS STATE

... THE "FIGHTING PARSON OF THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTION"

In 1889, the State of Pennsylvania placed a statue of **John Peter Muhlenberg** in the **U.S. Capitol's Statuary Hall**.



He was memorialized in a poem by Thomas Buchanan Read, titled "**The Rising**," published in *William Holmes McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader* (Cincinnati & New York: Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co., revised ed., 1879, Lesson LXV, pp. 200-204):

... Within its shade of elm and oak
The church of Berkley Manor stood:
There Sunday found the rural folk,
And some esteemed of gentle blood.

In vain their feet with loitering tread
Passed 'mid the graves where rank is naught:
All could not read the lesson taught

In that republic of the dead.

The pastor rose: the prayer was strong;

The psalm was warrior David's song;

The text, a few short words of might,-

'The Lord of Hosts shall arm the right!'

... He spoke of wrongs too long endured,

Of sacred rights to be secured;

Then from his patriot tongue of flame

The startling words for Freedom came.

The stirring sentences he spake

Compelled the heart to glow or quake,

And, rising on his theme's broad wing,

And grasping in his nervous hand

The imaginary battle-brand,

In face of death he dared to fling

Defiance to a tyrant king.

... Even as he

spoke, his frame

renewed

In eloquence of

attitude,

Rose, as it

seemed, a shoulder

higher;

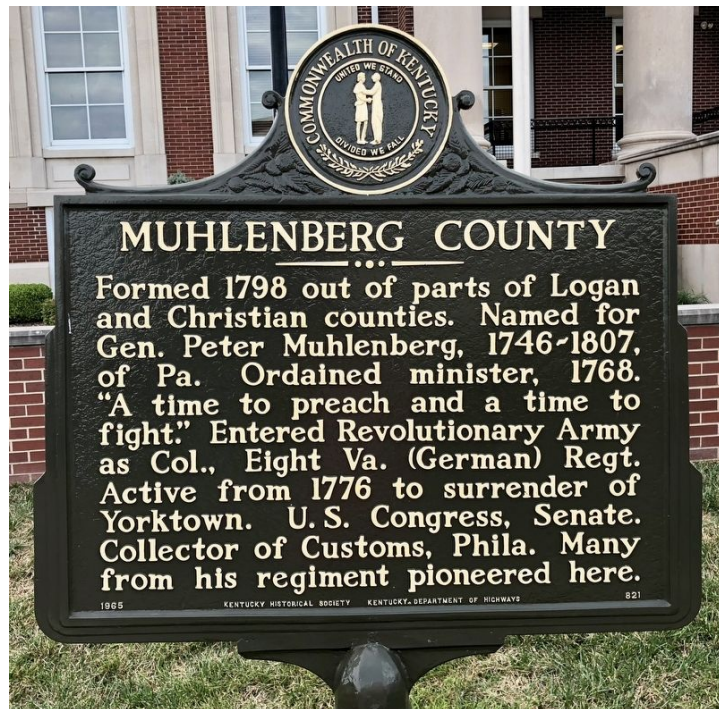
Then swept his

kindling glance of

fire

From startled pew

to breathless choir;



When suddenly his mantle wide

His hands impatient flung aside,

And, lo! He met their wondering eyes

Complete in all a warrior's guise.

A moment there was awful pause,-

... When Berkley cried, 'Cease, traitor! Cease!
God's temple is the house of peace!'

The other shouted, 'Nay, not so,
When God is with our righteous cause:
His holiest places then are ours,
His temples are our forts and towers
That frown upon the tyrant foe:
In this the dawn of Freedom's day
There is a time to fight and pray!

And now before the open door-
The **warrior priest** had ordered so-
The enlisting trumpet's sudden soar
Rang through the chapel, o'er and o'er,
Its long reverberating blow,

... So loud and clear, it seemed the ear
Of dusty death must wake and hear.
And there the startling drum and fife
Fired the living with fiercer life;

While overhead with wild increase,
Forgetting its ancient toll of peace,
The great bell swung as ne'er before:
It seemed as it would never cease;

And every word its ardor flung
From off its jubilant iron tongue
Was, 'War! War! War!'

"Who dares"-this was the patriot's cry,
As striding from the desk he came -
"Come out with me, in Freedom's name,
For her to live, for her to die?"

A hundred hands flung up reply,
A hundred voices answered "I!"

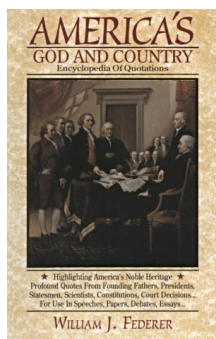
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