

Revolutions in the New World (1600–1800 AD)
Christian History Made Easy with Timothy Paul Jones
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A House of ‘Mirrors’

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. – John 1:14

³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
– John 8:31-32

Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. – John 14:6

²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. – James 1:21-25

‘A house of mirrors or hall of mirrors is a traditional attraction at funfairs (carnivals) and amusement parks. The basic concept behind a house of mirrors is to be a maze-like puzzle.^[1] In addition to the maze, participants are also given mirrors as obstacles, and glass panes to parts of the maze they cannot yet get to. Sometimes the mirrors may be distorted because of different curves, convex, or concave in the glass to give the participants unusual and confusing reflections of themselves, some humorous and others frightening. - Wikipedia

Revolutionary ideas in the New World changed the way people saw the world. A small band of Pilgrims on the Mayflower, Puritans in Massachusetts, and one exiled man named Roger Williams forged different paths toward religious liberty. Meanwhile, the scientific revolution caused people to wonder, what if God merely created this machine-like world and then left us alone? At a time when society was viewing God as increasingly distant, the Great Awakening would prove otherwise. A few unlikely men—a cross-eyed preacher named George Whitefield, a struggling missionary named John Wesley, and an unpopular gangly pastor named Jonathan Edwards—were all used by God to bring tidal waves of revival to the American colonies and beyond. – Christian History

Question: What new lenses were people using in the 17th century to view their world?

1. Revolution in Religious Liberty

- a. “Saints” and “strangers” on the Mayflower landed in Plymouth (1620).
- b. Roger Williams founded Providence Colony on the idea of religious freedom (1636).

Question: What are the pros and cons of using the civil government to enforce religion? What are the pros and cons of religious liberty?

Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” – 1 Corinthians 15:33

¹ First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. – 1 Timothy 2:1-2

2. Revolution in Human Reason

- a. Isaac Newton described the universe as a machine.
- b. Deism and Enlightenment contributed to a rising focus on science and human reason as the primary means for making sense of life.

Question: What evidence of deism do you see in our day? How do we sometimes think and act like deists?

¹⁰ He crouches, he bows down, And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones. ¹¹ He says to himself, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.” – Psalm 10:10-11

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. – Romans 8:28

3. Revival and the Great Awakening

- a. Moravian Pietists held a 100-year prayer meeting on the estate of Nikolaus von Zinzendorf in Germany.
- b. John and Charles Wesley founded Methodism in England.
- c. Jonathan Edwards led revival in American colonies.
- d. George Whitefield preached to huge crowds in England and American colonies.

Question: What do you find interesting about the people God used to bring about revival? Who do you expect God to use?

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” – John 12:32

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” – Romans 1:16-17

4. The American Revolution

Question: Was the American Revolution biblical or not? Why or why not?

¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. – Romans 13:1-2

“Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. – Deuteronomy 17:18

When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice. – 1 Kings 3:28

Conclusion: What lens are you using to view your world?

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. – Romans 12:1-2

Key Terms

Deism – Belief that God created the world but that he no longer acts directly or supernaturally in his world. Instead, he endowed the created order with natural laws that, if followed, lead to blessings.

Enlightenment – (also called the Age of Reason) Seventeenth- and eighteenth century social and philosophical movement that emphasized reason as the primary source of authority, displacing divine revelation.

Methodist – Beginning as a Pietist movement, Methodism was established by John and Charles Wesley during the Great Awakening. Called “Methodist” because of their methodological

approach to routines of prayer, fasting, Bible reading and other practices. Methodists hold to Arminian, not Calvinist views. Today, Methodists number 20–40 million worldwide.

Moravian Pietists – Also known as *Unitas Fratrum* or “Unity of the Brethren,” they trace their roots back to Jan Hus in the fourteenth century. When they fled Moravia in 1722 they established the Herrnhut religious community in Saxony on the estate of Nikolaus von Zinzendorf.

Pietism – Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestant movement that emphasized a life of personal discipline and devotion. The publication of *Pious Desires* by Lutheran pastor Philipp Jakob Spener marked an important beginning point for Pietism. Spener deeply influenced Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, who in turn influenced the Moravian Brothers and the Methodist movement.

Providence Colony – Colony in Rhode Island founded by Roger Williams in 1636 who defected from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Williams established Providence with the intent of providing religious freedom.

Puritans – Protestants in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England who wanted to purify the Church of England by reviving New Testament patterns of worship. Some Puritans from England sailed to America and settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony around the year 1630.

Revival (Great Awakening) – Revival is unusual work of God by which God applies the gospel to his people in an unusually powerful way, resulting in salvation of sinners and renewed obedience among saints. The human means through which God works to bring revival are faithful proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 10:15–17) and fervent prayer among God’s people (James 5:16). The Great Awakening in the mid-1700s in Europe and the American colonies is an example of revival.

Separatists – English Protestants who separated from the Church of England and formed independent congregations. The pilgrims on the Mayflower who settled Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts were Separatists.