

Jones, Timothy Paul

Christian History Made Easy Participant Guide

16. Session 10: Revolutions in the New World (AD 1600–1800)

This session traces two opposing currents in the 1600s–1700s. On one side, the Enlightenment and Deism pushed God to the margins, treating the universe as a self-running machine. On the other, God raised up praying communities and bold preachers whose revival—the Great Awakening—proved he was still at work. It also covers the birth of religious liberty in the American colonies.

Key takeaways

- Religious liberty took root in the New World: Separatist Pilgrims settled Plymouth (1620), and Roger Williams founded Providence Colony in Rhode Island (1636) on the principle that the state should not enforce religious faith—an idea later echoed in the First Amendment.
- The Enlightenment ('Age of Reason') made reason and science the primary authority, displacing divine revelation. This bred Deism: God made the world but no longer acts in it, so people need only follow nature's laws and Jesus' ethics rather than trust him for salvation.

- Pietism (begun by Philipp Jakob Spener's 'Pious Desires') stressed personal devotion and deeply shaped Nikolaus von Zinzendorf and the Moravians.
- Persecuted Moravian refugees found shelter on Zinzendorf's estate, founding Herrnhut ('the Lord's watch'), where in 1727 they began a round-the-clock prayer meeting that ran continuously for 100 years.
- The Great Awakening (mid-1700s) was revival—God powerfully applying the gospel through faithful preaching and fervent prayer. Its key figures: John and Charles Wesley (founders of Methodism), Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield.
- John Wesley's Aldersgate experience (1738)—his heart 'strangely warmed'—became a model of assurance of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Charles Wesley wrote over 7,000 hymns still sung today.
- Methodism took its name from its methodical routines of prayer, fasting, and Bible reading, and holds Arminian rather than Calvinist views.

Passages worth keeping

"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine."

John Wesley's 1738 conversion of assurance—the personal experience at the heart of the Methodist movement.

“Resolved: That all men should live to the glory of God. Resolved, secondly: That whether or not anyone else does, I will.”

Jonathan Edwards' teenage resolution, showing the personal resolve behind a leader of the Awakening.

How it connects

The chapter's two threads mirror Deuteronomy 6:12: when culture surges forward, people forget God and credit themselves. Deism was that forgetting; the century-long prayer meeting and the Awakening were God's answer, showing he had not, in fact, left the world alone.

Scripture referenced

- **Deut. 6:12** -- Moses' repeated warning not to forget the God who delivered you—framing the danger of a society that thinks it advances on its own power.
- **Rom. 10:15–17** -- Faithful proclamation of the gospel as the human means God uses in revival.
- **James 5:16** -- Fervent prayer as the other human means God uses in revival.
- **Psalms 101** -- David's psalm of 'I will' resolutions, used for the family study on commitment.