



A Tale of Three Revolutions

**Scientific, American, and
French: The Demise of
Christendom and the Rise of
the “New Order of the Ages”**

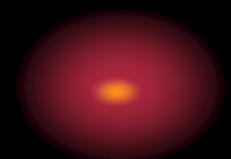
Opening Trivia Questions

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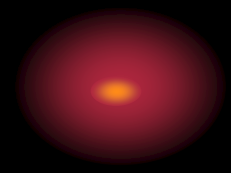
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 - **Answer: November 10, 1793 the French National Conventions turns Notre Dame Cathedral into a temple of Reason.**



Table Discussion Question



- **How could a government be so progressive about slavery and yet so reactionary about religion at the same time?**
- **Or if you prefer, are the ideals of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” compatible with the ideals of the gospel?**

The Scientific Revolution



- **New Scientific Discoveries helped to shatter the Medieval worldview and raised questions about traditional Christian ideas**
 - **Copernicus and Galileo's Heliocentric theory replaced geocentrism and raised questions about Joshua 10**

Science and Religion



- **Many early Natural Philosophers (scientists) believed in God and had theological interests**
 - **Galileo developed Biblical interpretations in line with his discoveries**
 - **Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle combined scientific research with theological speculation**

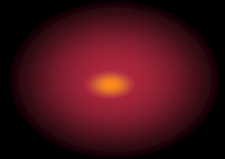
Growing Challenges

- **Charles Lyell's discoveries in geology suggested an old age for the earth questioning Bishop Usher's young earth calculations.**
- **Apologist increasingly relied upon Natural Theology and the Argument from Design in order to build a solid proof for the existence of God.**
- **Darwin's *Origin of Species* suggested an alternative explanation for complexity and the origin of life undercutting the Argument from Design.**



Agnosticism and Enlightenment

- **Darwin's theory makes it possible “to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”**
- **New Scientific ideas lead to an “Enlightenment”**
 - **The development of a “Deist” conception of God and other heterodoxies**
 - **Growing opposition to organized Christianity especially in the ideas of Rousseau and Voltaire**
 - **Enlightenment ideas will be a major driving force behind the American and French Revolutions**



Religious Aspects of the American Revolution



- **The Revolution. . .**
 - **As Religious Transformation**
 - **As Struggle for Religious Freedom**
 - **And Obedience to the Government**
 - **As Promoting Separation of Church and State**
 - **And Patriotic Idolatry**

Adams to Hezekiah Niles



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- **The Usual Quotation**
- **“The [American] Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people. . . .”**

The Full Quotation

- **The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people, a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. While the king, and all in authority under him, were believed to govern in justice and mercy according to the laws and constitution derived to them from the God of nature, and transmitted to them by their ancestors, they thought themselves bound to pray for the king and queen and all the royal family, and all in authority under them, as ministers ordained of God for their good. But when they saw those powers renouncing all the principles of authority, and bent upon the destruction of all the securities of their lives, liberties, and properties, they thought it their duty to pray for the Continental Congress and all the thirteen state congresses, etc.**



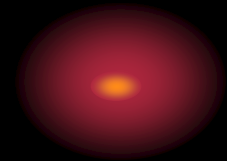
Religious Fears of Colonials



- **An Anglican Plot to install a Bishop in the colonies**
- **The establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Cambridge)**
- **Use of ministers to promote unlimited submission to the crown**
- **Quebec Act (One of the Intolerable Acts) Religious freedom for Catholics, but not for Congregationalists.**



APTHORP HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE, WHERE BURGOYNE WAS IMPRISONED



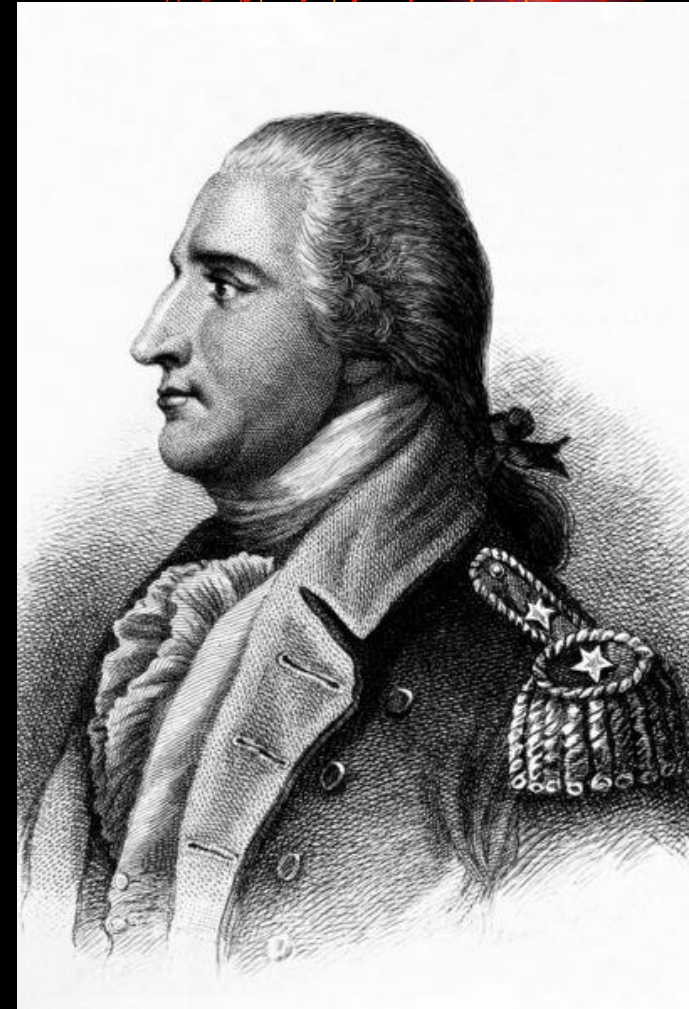


The Mitres - Minut.

P. Brevre sc.

Benedict Arnold, George Whitefield, and the Quebec Campaign

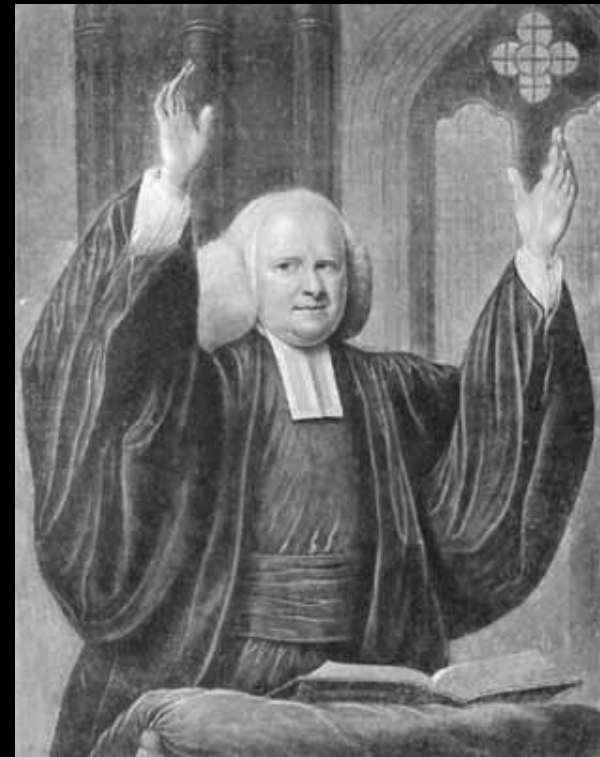
- **Benedict Arnold's officers and soldiers robbed Whitefield's grave to get his clerical collar before invading Canada.**





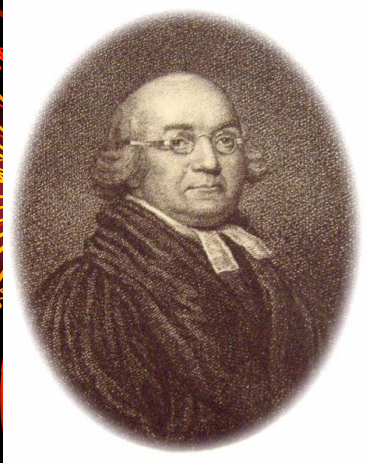
Failure

- **Despite the relics, Arnold's campaign suffers sickness and ends in failure**

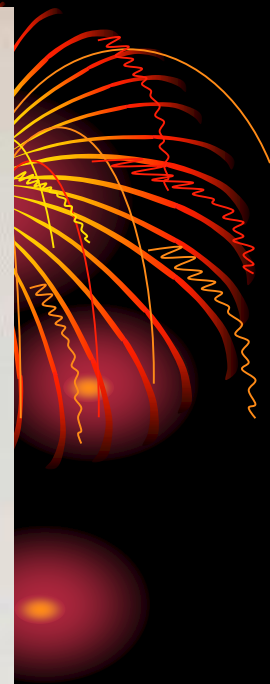




Mayhew vs. Boucher



- **When is it acceptable for a Christian to disobey the government?**
 - **Mayhew – Whenever they believe their liberty is threatened.**
 - **Preached a sermon in opposition to the Stamp Act**
 - **Boucher – Only when ordered to disobey a command of God**
 - **Defended the Tea Act and was forced to flee to England**



Religious Freedom



- **Mr. Backus Goes to Washington**
- **Mr. Jefferson writes a Bill**
- **The “Godless Constitution”**
- **The Bill of Rights**
- **The Voluntary Principle and the growth of a “Christian Nation”**

Jefferson's Bill for Religious Freedom

- ***“...Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint; that all attempts to influence by temporal punishments, or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being lord of both body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either.*”**



American Exceptionalism



- **The Growth of Christian Republicanism**
 - **Only in America is “liberal,” “republican,” and “democratic” government seen as compatible with conservative Christianity.**
- **America as the New Jerusalem**
 - **“Thus will our country resemble the new city which St. John saw ‘coming down from God out of heaven ordained as a bride for her husband.’” Samuel Cooper 1780**
 - **“A City on a Hill” and the “Last Best Hope for Mankind”**

For Table Discussion



- **How can a fuller appreciation of the religious history of the American Revolution help us to appreciate the legacies of that time period while not confusing the Kingdom of God with the United States of America?**

Origins of the French Revolution



- **A Hierarchical Society**
 - **First Estate: Bishops and Abbots who enjoyed great wealth from tithes and land holdings and paid no taxes**
 - Many philosophes saw them as oppressing the people.
 - **Second Estate: Nobility who had a monopoly on top government jobs military posts and church offices and were also exempt from taxes.**
 - **Third Estate: The rest of society.**

A Financial Crisis

- **The Government of France faced massive debts from spending to support the Seven Years War and American Revolution.**
- **A series of bad harvests in the 1780s exacerbated the problem and forced the King to call the Estates-General to consider ways of raising revenue.**
- **The Estates-General soon reorganized as the National Assembly, passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and moved to radically restructure French society and government**



Early Impact on Religion



- **August 4, 1789 – All tithes and seigniorial rights ended**
- **1789- 1790 – All religious vows suspended**
- **December 1789 – civil rights granted to Protestants and most Jews**
- **1790 – All church lands seized and sold to benefit the state**
- **April 1790 – Catholics leaders began organizing to resist the Revolution**

Civil Constitution of the Clergy



- **Adopted July 12, 1790**
- **Parishes were realigned with civil departments**
- **All clergy became civil servants**
- **Many “unnecessary” religious offices were eliminated**
- **All bishops and parish priests would be elected with no “veto” power in Rome**

The Oath

- **November 27, 1790 The National Assembly passed a law requiring all clergy to swear an oath of loyalty to the new constitution or lose their jobs**
 - **Almost all Bishops refused**
 - **48% of clergy only swore with an amendment that the state had no authority of spiritual matters**
 - **The clergy now split between those who support and condemn the revolution**



Radicalization

- **Pope Pius VI condemned the Revolution as anti-Catholic and claimed the liberty, equality, and the rights of man were sacrilegious**
- **In 1792 the flight of the King and outbreak of war led to the expulsion of “non-juring” clergy and much more aggressive “De-Christianizing” efforts.**
- **The rise of the Jacobins and the Reign of Terror accelerated these trends**



De-Christianization

- **A radical assault of Christianity was seen as necessary to bring about a “secular millenium”**
 - **New calendar had 10 day weeks and 10 months (no Sabbath or room for religious holidays, began at formation of the republic)**
 - **Elimination of Christian names for streets and towns**
 - **Church bells, statues, vestments, etc. were destroyed, many church buildings were attacked**
 - **Pressure on priests to marry**



The Cult of Reason

- **Attempt to replace Christianity with a deist or atheist cult of reason**
 - **Promoted “worship” of the Goddess of reason**
 - **Created modified versions of Christian festivals with sermons, hymns, processions, martyrs and saints**
 - **More extreme attacks on the church ended with the reign of terror, but the French and European religious context was forever altered by these events.**
 - **Often the strongest resistance to these changes came from female believers.**





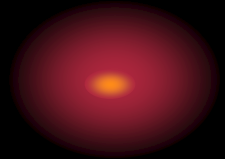
Concordat

- **In 1802 the Pope and Napoleon agree to the Concordat**
 - **Ends the separation of Church and States established in 1795**
 - **Gives Catholics, Protestants, and Jews full freedom of worship**
 - **Recognized Catholicism as the “majority religion”**
 - **Accepted the revolutionary confiscation of church lands**
 - **Kept the clergy as employees of the state with Napoleon choosing bishops and bishops choosing priests**
 - **Forced all current bishops to resign**



Legacies

- **The power and influence of the Catholic church was greatly weakened in France.**
- **The French Government became increasingly secular**
- **19th century politics would include frequent clashes between Catholic support of conservatives and secular support of liberals.**
- **Both a decline of religious practice and personal renewals of devotion of piety would persist.**



Applications



- **To paraphrase Francis Schaeffer, “How Should We Now Live?”**
- **Given that the clock cannot be reversed, how do we live as faithful Christians in the shadows of the Scientific, American, and French Revolutions?**