

REFORM AND CULTURE: 1790-1860

I. The Second Great Awakening

A. State of American religion in early 18th century

1. 75% of 23 million Americans attended church regularly
2. Many church-goers had become more liberal in their thinking
 - a. Rationalist (enlightenment) ideas of the French Revolution era had softened the older orthodoxy.
 - b. Deism, promoted by Paine, influenced Jefferson, Franklin & others rooted in the spirit of the Enlightenment.
 - i. Relied on reason rather than revelation; on science rather than Bible.
 - ii. Rejected concept of original sin and denied Christ's divinity.
 - iii. Believed in Supreme Being who created a knowable universe and endowed human beings with a capacity for moral behavior.
 - c. Deism inspired an important spin-off from severe Puritanism -- Unitarianism
 - i. God exists in only one person and not the orthodox Trinity.
 - ii. Stressed essential goodness of human nature rather than evil nature.
 - iii. Free will and salvation through good works
 - iv. God a loving Father, not a stern creator
 - d. Unitarian faith embraced by intellectuals like Ralph Waldo Emerson whose rationalism and optimism contrasted with hellfire Calvinist doctrines (especially predestination and human depravity).

B. Impact of Second Great Awakening

1. Reaction against growing liberalism (deism, unitarianism, etc.) in religion around 1800.
 - a. Began on southern frontier but soon spread to northeastern cities.
 - b. One of most momentous episodes in history of American religion
 - c. Influenced more people than the First Great Awakening.
2. Effects
 - a. Converted countless souls
 - b. Shattered and reorganized churches and new sects.
 - c. Fostered new reform movements: Prison reform, temperance, women's movement, and abolition.
3. Spread to the masses on the frontier by huge "camp meetings"
 - a. As many as 25,000 persons gathered for several days to hear hellfire gospel.
 - b. Methodists and Baptists benefitted most from revivalism.
 - i. Both sects stressed personal conversion (contrary to Predestination)
 - ii. Relatively democratic control of church affairs.
 - iii. Emotionalism
4. Peter Cartwright best known of Methodist "circuit riders"(traveling preachers)
5. Charles Grandison Finney the greatest of revival preachers

- a. Believed in earthly perfectionism (Puritan strain of thought)
 - b. Inspired major reform movements: Education, temperance, and abolitionism
- C. Denominational Diversity
1. "Burned-Over District: Western NY, many New England Puritans had settled there and the region became known for its "hellfire and damnation" sermons; fragmentation occurred.
 - a. Adventists (or Millerites) grew to several hundred thousand adherents.
 - i. Led by William Miller, interpreted Bible to mean that Christ would return on October 22, 1844.
 - ii. Failure of Christ to appear dampened but did not destroy movement.
 2. Wealthier, better-educated levels of society not as affected by revivalism -- Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Unitarians.
 3. Less prosperous, less "learned" communities in the rural South and West most affected by revivalism -- Methodists, Baptists, and other sects.
 4. Slavery issue split Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians along sectional lines. -- Secession of southern churches foreshadowed secession of southern states.

D. Mormons

1. Joseph Smith founded the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in 1830 and wrote the Book of Mormon after having experienced a revelation. -- Church of Latter Day Saints founded in "Burned-Over District"
2. Mormons became persecuted in Ohio, then in Missouri and Illinois.
 - a. Cooperative nature of sect offended individualistic Americans
 - b. Accusations of polygamy, esp. Joseph Smith, increased opposition.
 - c. 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother murdered and mangled by mob in Illinois.
3. Brigham Young led Mormons to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1846-47
 - a. Community became prosperous frontier theocracy and a cooperative commonwealth. -- Cultivated semi-arid Utah by ingenious & cooperative methods of irrigation.
 - b. Federal army marched in 1857 against the Mormons willing to die for their cause and crisis ended without serious bloodshed.
4. Mormons later flouted antipolygamy laws passed by Congress in 1862 & 1882. -- Statehood delayed until 1896 as a result of their unique marital customs.

II. An Age of Reform

A. Most reforms driven by evangelical religion (Second Great Awakening).

1. Many of these modern idealists dreamed anew the old Puritan vision of a perfected society.
2. Many desired to reaffirm traditional values as society plunged into a more complex world of a transforming market economy.
3. Women particularly prominent in reform crusades, esp. in their struggle for suffrage. -- Movements offered many middle-class

women opportunities to escape the confines of home and enter public affairs.

4. Major Issues
 - a. Abolition of slavery (overshadowed all other reform movements -- see next chapter)
 - b. Temperance
 - c. Women's rights
 - d. Education reform
 - e. Ending war
 - f. Conditions for the mentally ill
 - g. Prison reform -- Push for reformatories rather than punitive institutions
 - h. Ending imprisonment for debt
- B. Crusade against alcohol
 1. Alcohol abuse rampant in 19th c. America
 - a. Abusers included women, clergymen, and members of Congress.
 - b. Decreased the efficiency of labor while increasing injuries in the workplace.
 - c. Family hindered by physical danger to women and children.
 2. American Temperance Society
 - a. Formed in Boston in 1826 (after feeble attempts)
 - Within a few years about 1000 local groups emerged.
 - b. Urged drinkers to give up alcohol and organized children's clubs.
 - c. T.S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Barroom and What I Saw There* (1854) described in shocking detail how a secure village was transformed by Sam Slade's tavern.
 - 2nd best seller of the 1850s behind Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
 3. Two Major strategies in early battles against alcohol
 - a. Temperance -- Moderate use of alcohol rather than abstention
 - b. Outlaw alcohol
 - i. Neal S. Dow "Father of Prohibition" sponsored Maine Law of 1851 -- Prohibited the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquor.
 - ii. By 1857, 12 states had passed various prohibitory laws.
 - iii. Yet, during same decade, many laws repealed or declared unconstitutional
 4. Results
 - a. Much less drinking among women than earlier in the century
 - b. Less per capita consumption of hard liquor.
 5. Temperance the least sectional of all the reform movements.
 - Included abolitionists like Garrison and proslavery defenders in the South.
- C. Women's Rights
 1. Sexual differences increasingly emphasized in 19th c. America as a result of Industrial Revolution.
 - a. Burgeoning market separated men and women into sharply distinct economic roles.
 - b. Women seen to be physically and emotionally weak but also artistic and refined.

- c. "Republican Motherhood": Women seen as keepers of society's conscience with special responsibility to teach children how to be good and productive citizens.
 - d. Some women wanted to break away from role of homemaker and participate in the public world of men.
2. Female reformers advocated women's suffrage and other increased rights for women
 - a. Also participated in general reform movement -- temperance & abolition
 - b. Lucretia Mott -- Along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, organized Seneca Falls Convention
 - c. Elizabeth Cady Stanton -- Urged equality for women, rights to sue, rights to own real & personal property.
 - d. Susan B. Anthony
 - Quaker; protégé of Stanton; militant lecturer for woman's rights
 - e. Grimke sisters
 - i. Angelina Grimke -- Southern white fierce speaker against slavery and later in favor of women's rights.
 - ii. Sara Grimke -- Powerful writer on behalf of the women's rights movement.
 - f. Lucy Stone -- Helped organize first national women's rights convention in 1850.
 - i. An avid abolitionist; broke with male counterparts after the war over the dispute of women's suffrage.
 - ii. Retained her maiden name after she was married
 - Women who follow her example are known as "Lucy Stoners"
 - g. Amelia Bloomer -- Popularized the wearing of a short skirt with Turkish trousers. -- "Bloomers" were challenged to be too masculine and to convey immorality.
 - h. Margaret Fuller -- Edited a transcendentalist journal, *The Dial*.
 3. Seneca Falls Convention (1848) also "Women's' Rights Convention"
 - a. Organized by Stanton and Mott
 - b. "Declaration of Sentiments": "...all men *and women* are created equal."
 - c. One resolution formally demanded women's' suffrage.
 - d. Launched the modern woman's rights movement
 - Became object of scorn and denunciation from press and pulpit.
 - e. Attended by 61 women and 34 men.
 4. Woman's movement overshadowed by events of the era
 - a. Slavery issue dominated while the Civil War ensued.
 - b. Yet, women gradually admitted to colleges while some, beginning in Miss. in 1839, allowed to own property after marriage.
- D. Education
1. Public Education
 - a. Support for free public education gradually supported by the wealthy
 - b. Tax-supported public education triumphed between 1825 and 1850 (although lagging in South)
 - i. Laborers increasingly demanded education for their children.
 - ii. Manhood suffrage most important in Jackson's day; free vote pushed free education.

- c. Horace Mann
 - i. Argued key to reform was better education
 - ii. Established state normal schools to better train teachers.
 - iii. Influence spread to other states and impressive improvements made.
- d. Secondary education lagged and 1 million people still illiterate by 1860 -- Slaves forbidden to learn reading or writing; even free northern blacks usually excluded.
- 2. Noah Webster
 - a. Dictionary helped standardize American English
 - b. His readers and grammar books used by millions of children in 19th c. -- Partly designed to promote patriotism
- 3. William H. McGuffey
 - a. Grade school readers 1st published in 1830's; sold 122 million copies.
 - b. Lessons emphasized morality, patriotism, and idealism.
- 4. Higher Education
 - a. 2nd Great Awakening -- creation of many small, denominational, liberal arts colleges, mostly in South and West.
 - b. Women's schools in secondary ed. gained some respectability in 1820s.
 - i. Emma Willard est. in 1821, the Troy (NY) Female Seminary.
 - ii. Oberlin College open to both men and women in 1837; and blacks.
- 5. Lyceums: provided platforms for traveling lecturers in science, literature, & moral philosophy; 3,000 lyceum lecture associations existed by 1835.
- E. American Peace Society
 - 1. Agitated for peace and gained momentum in the pre-Civil War years.
 - 2. Linked with the European crusade, made promising progress until the Crimean war in the 1850s and the American Civil War.
- F. Dorothea Dix worked to improve treatment of the mentally handicapped.
 - 1. Traveled some 60,000 miles in 8 years compiling reports of squalid conditions from first hand experiences in poorhouses and basements where the insane were often kept in chains.
 - 2. Her efforts resulted in improved conditions and in a gain for the concept that the demented were not willfully perverse but mentally ill. -- 15 states created new hospitals and asylums as a result.
 - 3. Appointed superintendent of women nurses for the Union forces during Civil War.

III. Wilderness Utopias

- A. Various reformers set up more than 40 communities of a cooperative, communistic, or "communitarian" nature.
- B. 1825, New Harmony, Indiana, the site of about 1000 persons led by Robert Owen. -- Communitarian society founded the first American kindergarten, first free public school and the first free public library.
- C. Brook Farm in Mass. started in 1841 by 20 intellectuals: "plain living and high thinking"
 - 1. Prospered until 1846 when new communal building burned down.
 - 2. Nathaniel Hawthorne a resident (author of *The Scarlet Letter*)
- D. Oneida Colony founded in NY in 1848; more radical

1. Practices free love ("complex marriage"), birth control, and eugenic selection of parents to produce superior offspring.
 - a. Believed in corporate marriage of all members to each other.
 - b. Communal care of children.
 - c. Equality of genders
 2. Leader fled to Canada to escape prosecution for adultery.
 3. Colony flourished for over 30 years largely due to its craftsmen making superior steel traps and Oneida Community (silver) plate.
 4. In 1879-80, group embraced monogamy and abandoned communism.
- E. Shakers -- United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing
1. Established in Lebanon, New York.
 2. Longest-lived sect beginning in 1776 finally extinct in 1940.
 3. Set up about 20 religious communities; membership about 6,000 in 1840
 4. Communistic
 5. Opposition to both marriage and free love led to their extinction.
 - a. Believed in celibacy, equal spiritual value of men and women, and simplicity of architecture and furnishings.
 - b. New members were adopted as orphans or recruited through conversion.
- F. Amana Community founded in Iowa in 1855
1. Perfectionist communal society.
 2. Millennialists -- Manufacturing business from community still in existence.
- G. Mormons considered by some to be a utopian society - most successful
- IV. The Changing American Family
- A. Women growing more conscious of themselves as individuals and as "sisters" as the male and female sex roles were becoming more increasingly divided.
1. Still a man's world but women fared better in U.S. than in Europe esp. on the frontier where women were more scarce.
 2. Increasing numbers of women avoided marriage; 10% by 1860
 3. Women began working as schoolteachers and in domestic service.
 - a. 10% of white women working for pay outside own homes in 1850
 - b. 20% had been employed at some time prior to marriage.
- B. Most women left their jobs upon marriage and became homemakers
1. "Cult of domesticity" glorified traditional function of the homemaker.
 2. Women commanded immense moral power and increasingly made decisions that altered the character of the family itself.
 3. *Godey's Lady's Book*, founded in 1830, survived until 1898; promoted "cult of domesticity" -- Read by countless millions of women; circulation was a staggering 150,000.
 4. Catharine Beecher (daughter of Lyman Beecher and sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe)
 - a. Called on American inventors to improve life for the homemaker
 - b. Redesigned the American kitchen and home to provide more comfort for women and a nurturing environment for the family.
 - c. Ironically, labor-saving inventions made many women's life more challenging as more work was expected of them as a result.
- C. Changes in the family
1. Love, not "arrangement", more frequently determined the choice of a spouse. -- Families became more close-knit and affectionate
 2. Families grew smaller

- a. Avg. of 6 kids in 1800; less than 5 in 1900; births fell 1/2 during the 19th c.
 - b. Contraception practiced quietly and secretly; still taboo topic in public.
 - 3. Smaller families meant child-centered families -- Corporal punishment reduced; more emphasis on shaping than breaking.
 - 4. Children raised to be independent individuals making decisions on internalized moral standards.
 - 5. Thus, outlines of the "modern family" were clear by mid-century.
- V. Frontier experience uniquely American
- A. Alexis de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835) -- Individualism and equality formed the distinguishing values of antebellum American life. Toqueville has defined the terms for discussion of the American character in the early half of the 19th century. -- Compared to eastern counterparts, western life was extremely rough, and westerners were generally more "crude" in their habits and lifestyle; highly individualistic
 - B. Democracy on the frontier
 - 1. Equality reigned on the frontier; (except slavery)
 - 2. White manhood suffrage came to be the rule.
 - 3. Lovers of freedom: Cherished states' rights and localism
 - 4. Intensely patriotic and nationalistic
 - C. (See Frederick Jackson Turner)
- VI. Artistic Achievements
- A. Thomas Jefferson probably finest American architect of his generation -- Brought classical design to Monticello while the quadrangle of the Univ. of VA at Charlottesville is one of the finest examples of classical architecture in America.
 - B. Artists
 - 1. Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) among the best American painters of the era. -- Several portraits of Washington, all somewhat idealized and dehumanized.
 - 2. Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) painted some 60 portraits of Washington.
 - C. Hudson River School of Art -- Emphasized romantic mirrorings of local landscapes
 - D. Louis Daguerre, a Frenchman, invented a crude photograph known as the daguerreotype.
 - E. Music: Stephen Foster wrote famous black songs ("darker" tunes)
- VII. Literature
- A. Few Americans read "polite" literature in early 19th c.
 - 1. Poured most of their creative efforts into practical outlets.
 - 2. Much of their reading matter was imported or plagiarized from England.
 - 3. American literature received a strong boost from nationalist wave after War of 1812.
 - B. The Knickerbocker Group in NY boasted some of America's greatest early writers.
 - 1. Washington Irving (1783-1859)
 - a. First American to win international recognition as a literary figure.
 - b. 1809, *Knickerbocker's History of N.Y.*: amusing caricatures of the Dutch c. 1819-20, *The Sketch Book* -- English and American themes

- and included Dutch-Amer. tales "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"
 - c. Also a historian: Washington's biography and other historical works.
 - 2. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851).
 - a. First American novelist to gain world fame.
 - b. *The Spy* (1821), *Leatherstocking Tales*; *Last of the Mohicans*
 - 3. William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) -- "Thanatopsis" (1817) -- One of first high-quality poems by an American.
- C. Transcendentalism
 - 1. Emerged in New England during 2nd quarter of the 19th c.
 - a. Resulted in part from a liberalizing of the austere Puritan theology.
 - b. Also owed much to foreign thinkers including German romantic philosophers.
 - 2. Philosophy
 - a. Truth "transcends" the senses: cannot not be found by empiricism alone.
 - b. Every person possesses an inner light that can illuminate the highest truth and put him/her in direct touch with God, or the "Oversoul."
 - c. Individualism in matters of religion as well as social.
 - i. Commitment to self-reliance, self-culture, and self-discipline.
 - ii. Hostile to formal institutions of any kind and conventional wisdom.
 - 3. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)
 - a. "Oversoul" philosophy of an organic universe.
 - b. Stressed self-reliance, self-confidence, self-improvement, optimism, and freedom.
 - 4. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)
 - a. Associate of Emerson; a poet, mystic, transcendentalist, and nonconformist.
 - b. *Walden: Or Life in the Woods* (1854)
 - c. Essay on *Civil Disobedience* -- Written as a result of his brief experience in jail when he refused to pay taxes to support the Mexican war effort. -- Writings later encouraged Mahatma Gandhi to resist British rule in India and later Martin Luther King's thinking about nonviolence.
 - 5. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) - *Leaves of Grass* (1855)
 - 6. Margaret Fuller -- published "The Dial"
- D. Poetry: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)
 - 1. One of most popular poets ever produced in America.
 - Wrote historically-based poetry
 - 2. Most admired poems based on American traditions: "Evangeline," "Hiawatha," and "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and "Paul Revere's Ride."
- E. Individualists and Dissenters
 - 1. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)
 - a. Gifted lyric poet *The Raven*, *Tamerlane* and many tales of terror & darkness
 - b. Excelled in the short story: Explored the world of the spirit and the emotions
 - 2. Nathaniel Hawthorne

- a. *The Scarlet Letter* (1850); *The Marble Faun* (1860)
- b. Reflected Calvinist obsession with original sin and with never-ending struggle between good and evil.
- 3. Herman Melville (1819-1891): *Moby Dick*; *Typee*; *Billy Budd*
 - a. Lashed out at the popular optimism of his day.
 - b. Believed in the Puritan doctrine of original sin and his characters spoke the mystery of life.

F. Journalism

- 1. Newspaper bolstered by increased literacy
- 2. Tabloid of "gutter journalism" focused on murders, scandals, & other human interest stories.
- 3. Decades just before the Civil War marked the golden age of personal journalism
 - a. Horace Greeley -- editor and owner of New York *Tribune* published own paper (founded in 1841)
 - i. Incredibly influential in forming public opinion. (even outside NY state)
 - ii. Merciless foe of slavery
- 4. Increased public knowledge meant an increased ability to make democracy work.

VIII. Science: John J. Audubon (1785-1851)

- A. His illustrated *Birds of America* attained considerable popularity.
- B. Audubon Society for the protection of birds named after him.