

## Religious Revival, Reform, and Cultural Agitation in Antebellum America

### The Second Great Awakening: Another Religious Revival

1. Began in 1800
2. A wave of religious fervor swept over the country
3. Women became more involved in religion during the Second Great Awakening
4. Preachers
  - a. Peter Cartwright:
    - i. Revivalist, traveling preacher
    - ii. Converted thousands to Christianity
  - b. Charles Grandison Finney: one of the greatest revivalist preachers
  - c. Many preachers preached in Western NY where many Puritans settled
5. Widened the gap between the societal classes and regions
  - a. The more prosperous and conservative denominations in the East were little touched by revivalism
  - b. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Unitarians derived its members from the wealthier parts of society
  - c. Methodists and Baptists came from less prosperous communities in the South and West
6. The issue of slavery split the churches apart
7. Burned-over District
  - a. Coined by Charles Grandison Finney
  - b. Referred to area in Western NY State, along Erie Canal
  - c. Area was so heavily evangelized
    - i. There was no more “fuel” left to “burn”
    - ii. Meaning there was no more unconverted population to convert
  - d. Area also related, along with Central NY, to other movements
    - i. Abolition
    - ii. Women’s Rights
    - iii. Utopian Social Experiments
    - iv. Mormonism

### A Desert Zion in Utah

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)
2. Joseph Smith
  - a. The Mormon Prophet
  - b. Founded Mormon Church in 1830
  - c. He deciphered the Book of Mormon from some golden plates given to him by the angel Moroni
  - d. Led the Mormons from NY to Illinois
  - e. Murdered in 1844
3. Brigham Young
  - a. Led the Mormons to Utah
  - b. To avoid persecution

## Free Schools for a Free People

1. Tax-supported public education came about between 1825-1850
2. Americans eventually saw
  - a. They had to educate their children
  - b. Children were the future
3. The teachers of the schools
  - a. Were mostly men
  - b. Did not know how to teach
4. There were not very many schools in the U.S. because of their high costs to communities
5. Horace Mann campaigned effectively for a better school system

## Public Universities

1. State-supported Universities
  - a. The first state-supported universities in the South in 1795
  - b. The University of Virginia was founded by Thomas Jefferson
2. Emma Willard
  - a. Women's schools at the secondary level came in the 1820s
  - b. Founded Troy Female Seminary (1821)
  - c. It was still widely believed that a women's place is in the home

## Crime &amp; Prison Reform

1. States gradually abolished debtors' prisons due to public demand
2. Criminal codes in the states were being softened
3. The number of capital offenses was being reduced
4. Society began to think that prisons should reform as well as punish
5. Dorothy Dix
  - a. Traveled the country
  - b. Visited different asylums
  - c. Released a report on insanity and asylums
  - d. Her protests resulted in improved conditions for the mentally ill
6. American Peace Society
  - a. Was formed in 1828
  - b. William Ladd was the leader
  - c. Pacifist organization
  - d. Organized peace conferences
  - e. Opposed to wars
    - i. but not the Civil War
    - ii. Civil War was police action
    - iii. Against criminals of the Confederacy

## The Temperance Movement

1. Demon Rum
  - a. The "Old Deluder" = Satan
  - b. It keeps men from the knowledge of the Scriptures
2. Drinking problems due to
  - a. Social norms
  - b. Hard & monotonous life
3. Drinking
  - a. Decreased worker efficiency
  - b. Threatened the family structure.
4. The problem of drinking was found in all walks of life
  - a. Women
  - b. Clergymen
  - c. Congress
5. The American Temperance Society
  - a. Formed in 1826
  - b. Its members persuaded people to stop drinking
6. Neal S. Dow
  - a. "Father of Prohibition"
  - b. Thought that alcohol should be removed by legislation
  - c. Supported the Maine Law of 1851 that banned the manufacture and sale of liquor in Maine.
  - d. US banned the sale of alcohol with the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1918

## Women's Rights Movement

1. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of women was
  - a. To stay at home
  - b. Be subordinate to her husband
2. Women could not vote
3. Married women could not retain her property
4. Women actually started to avoid marriage because of that
5. Gender differences were emphasized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because
  - a. Market economy was separating women and men into distinct economic roles
  - b. Women were viewed as artistic and the keepers of society's conscience
  - c. Men were viewed as strong but crude
6. Seneca Falls Convention
  - a. July 19-20, 1848
  - b. Wesleyan Methodist Church in New York
  - c. Woman's Rights Convention
  - d. Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott
  - e. Declaration of Sentiments
    - i. Drawn up by Stanton
    - ii. Declaration of Independence as her guide

- iii. "All Men & Women had been created equal"
- iv. Listed 18 "injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman."
- f. Stanton also drafted 11 resolutions
  - i. Made argument that women had natural right to equality in all spheres
  - ii. 9<sup>th</sup> Resolution made the assertion that it was the duty of women to secure for themselves the right to vote.
  - iii. "I saw clearly that the power to make the laws was the right through which all other rights could be secured."
- g. 300 attendees: 260 women, 40 men
- h. In 1851 Stanton met Susan B. Anthony
  - i. Anthony was a young temperance worker
  - ii. The two join in long struggle for women's suffrage
  - iii. Victory in 1920 with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment
  - iv. 72 years after Seneca Falls
  - v. Only one signer of the Seneca Falls Declaration lived long enough to cast her vote – Charlotte Woodward

#### The Transcendentalist Movement (1830s)

1. People, men and women equally, have knowledge about themselves and the world around them that "transcends" or goes beyond what they can see, hear, taste, touch or feel.
2. Transcendentalists rejected the theory that all knowledge come to the mind through the senses
3. Truth, rather, transcends the senses and can't be found just by observation
4. Knowledge comes from within the person
5. Resulted from
  - a. Liberalizing of Puritan theology
  - b. Foreign influences
6. Associated traits included:
  - a. Self-reliance
  - b. Self-culture
  - c. Self-discipline
7. Ralph Waldo Emerson
  - a. Harvard educated transcendentalist essayist, poet, and philosopher
  - b. Urged American writers to
    - i. Forget European traditions
    - ii. Write about American interests
  - c. Believed that people were
    - i. Naturally good
    - ii. Everyone's potential was limitless
  - d. Inspired his colleagues to look into themselves, into nature, into art, and through work for answers to life's most perplexing questions

- e. His intellectual contributions to the philosophy of transcendentalism inspired a uniquely American idealism and spirit of reform
  - f. Wrote “The American Scholar” – an intellectual Declaration of Independence
8. Henry David Thoreau
- a. Transcendentalist who believed
    - i. That one should reduce his bodily wants
    - ii. In order to gain time for a pursuit of truth
    - iii. Through study and meditation
  - b. For two years Thoreau carried out the most famous experiment in self-reliance
    - i. He went to Walden Pond
    - ii. Built a hut
    - iii. Tried to live self-sufficiently
    - iv. Without trappings or interference of society
  - c. Later, he wrote about
    - i. The simplicity and unity of all things in nature
    - ii. His faith in humanity
    - iii. His sturdy individualism
  - d. Reminded everyone that life is wasted pursuing wealth and following social customs
  - e. Nature can show that “all good things are wild and free”
9. Transcendentalists
- a. Led the celebration of the American experimentation as one of individualism and self-reliance
  - b. They took progressive stands on
    - i. Women’s rights
    - ii. Abolition
    - iii. Reform
    - iv. Education
  - c. They criticized
    - i. Government
    - ii. Organized religion
    - iii. Laws
    - iv. Social institutions
    - v. Growing industrialization
  - d. They created an American “state of mind” in which
    - i. Imagination was better than reason
    - ii. Creativity was better than theory
    - iii. Action was better than contemplation
  - e. They had faith that all would be well because humans could transcend limits and reach astonishing heights

Excerpt from *Walden*

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

"Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify."

– from *Walden* (1854), by Henry David Thoreau