

An American Renaissance: Religion, Romanticism, and Reform

- Enlightenment prevailed in America—**strict rationalism and republicanism**

Rational Religion

- Americans' special mission to provide example of republican virtue
 - Impatience and perfectionism
- **Religious belief and social idealism = reform**

Deism

- **Calvinism became more optimistic**
 - Enlightenment: man's inherent goodness
- **Deism: God planned the universe, built it, set it in motion, and then left it to its own fate**
 - Deists: skeptical of miracles, rejected belief that Bible was wholly true, free speech and religion
- **Puritan churches were most vulnerable to logic of Enlightenment**

Unitarianism and Universalism

- **Unitarianism: emphasized oneness and benevolence of God, inherent goodness of mankind primacy of reason and conscience over established creeds and confessions**
 - Flourished with Congregational churches
 - William Ellery Channing: Unitarian leader
 - American Unitarian Association: 125 churches
 - Literary men, elites, professors, elite wealthy
 - **Man is too good for god**
- **Universalism: stressed salvation of all men and women, not just predestined few, God was merciful**
 - Working class
 - John Murray founded first Universalist church
 - **God is too good for man**

The Second Great Awakening

- **Americans remained profoundly religious people despite impact of rationalism**
- **Great Revival sparked in 1800 due to fear of rising secularism**
 - Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, struggled to purify by launching revivals that captivated Yale students

Frontier Revivals

- **Second Great Awakening gave rise to new institution: camp meeting**
 - Evangelists found ready audiences
- **Presbyterians gained from Plan of Union, worked out in 1801 with Congregationalists of Connecticut and other states**

- Presbyterians and Congregationalists agreed on doctrine and differed mainly on form of church government
- New Englanders became Presbyterians through “Presbygational” churches
- **Baptists embraced simplicity that appealed to common people of the frontier**
 - Infallibility of Bible, humans’ innate depravity
 - Replaced predestination with free will
 - Equality of all before God
 - The Congregation was its own highest authority—no need to appeal to higher power
- **Methodists established more centralized church structure**
 - Shared Baptist emphasis on salvation by free will
 - **Developed most effective evangelical method of all: minister on horseback**
 - Circuit rider, Francis Asbury
 - Peter Cartwright
 - **By 1840s Methodists had grown to be largest Protestant church**
- **Camp meetings drew large crowds**
 - Very influential
 - Social outlet for rural folk—women
 - More democratic faith among people living on the frontier

The Burned-over District

- **Western New York experienced intense levels of evangelical activity—burned-over district**
- **Charles Finney: preacher**
 - Opposed predestination; “What role can the individual play in earning salvation?”
 - **Transformed revivals so that they were collective instead of individual**
 - Faith and good works
 - Became president of Oberlin College: first to admit women and blacks

The Mormons

- **Burned-over district gave rise to Mormons**
 - Founded by Joseph Smith
 - Visions during his childhood
 - *Book of Mormons*—lost chapter of the Bible, links Indians to Israel and Second Coming of Christ
- **Smith began forming his own church**
 - Most converts were New England farmers who migrated west to New York
 - They found in Mormonism the promise of a pure kingdom of Christ in America
 - Orthodox Christian faith was threatened
- **Mormons were subjected to abuse—they migrated from state to state, settled in Illinois (Nauvoo)**
 - Smith was attacked for practicing polygamy
 - Non-Mormons attacked Nauvoo—Smith arrested
 - Smith was murdered in jail
- **Brigham Young succeeded Joseph Smith**
 - Strong-minded, intelligent, decisive
 - Organized unsteady peace with non-Mormons—evacuated Nauvoo
 - Settled near Great Salt Lake, then Mexico

- **By the end of 1848, Mormons had developed efficient irrigation system, brought life to the desert**
 - Utah territory was established

Romanticism in America

- **Revival of emotional piety during the early 1800s represented a widespread tendency throughout the US and Europe to accentuate the stirrings of the spirit rather than the dry logic of reason**
- **Emphasis on individualism, idealizing virtues of the common people, original and creative genius**
- **Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason***—emphasized limits of science
- Romantics believed people have innate conceptions of conscience and beauty

Transcendentalism

- **Movement in New England:** emphasis on those things that transcended the limits of reason
 - Inspired by Kant, rooted in New England Puritanism, influenced by Quaker doctrine of inner light
 - Mysticism
- **Transcendental Club:** loose association of diverse individualists
 - Liberal clergymen—Theodore Parker
 - Writers—Henry David Thoreau
 - Learned women—Sophia Peabody, Margaret Fuller (published *Dial*)

Ralph Waldo Emerson

- **Spread transcendentalist gospel**
- Lectures and writings expressed core view of transcendentalist worldview
 - *The American Scholar:* urged young Americans to put aside awe of European culture and explore their own new world—“**intellectual declaration of independence**”
 - *Essay on Self-Reliance:* message of individualism

Henry David Thoreau

- Determined to practice plain living and high thinking
- His purpose was **not** to lead a hermit’s life
- *Walden, or Life in the Woods*
- Refused to pay tax because he did not support Mexican War—jailed
 - *Civil Disobedience:* influenced Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.’s passive opposition
- **People must follow their conscience**
- **Gained little support at the time but inspired reform movements**

The Flowering of American Literature

- **Great outpouring of literature from 1850-1855**
 - *Representative Men* by Emerson
 - *Walden* by Thoreau
 - *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
 - *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville
 - *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman
 - Foursome of poets: Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell

Literary Giants

- **Nathaniel Hawthorne was the supreme writer of the New England group—*Twice Told Tales***
 - Examined sin and consequence, pride, selfishness
- **Emily Dickinson was the most original and power of the New England poets**
 - solitary withdrawal from larger society, focus on psychological state
- **Edgar Allan Poe considered fear as the most powerful emotion**
 - Master of gothic horror, inventor of detective story, making the supernatural seem like reality
- **Herman Melville went to sea as a youth**
 - Explored darker recesses of the soul
 - **Book was aimed at two audiences:**
 - Adventure on the high seas
 - Philosophical and psychological realms

Walt Whitman

- **Most provocative writer**
- Fascinated by city
- **Rejected idea that a woman's proper sphere was in a supportive and dependent role**
- Sexual undertones

The Popular Press

- **Massive expansion of popular press**
 - Steam-driven Napier press—Richard Hoe improved on it
- **High cost of press made it harder for a person of small means to break into publishing**
- **On the other hand, it expedited production of inexpensive newspapers, magazines, and books**
 - “Penny dailies” newspapers
 - More newspapers than any nation in the world
- **Results of soaring readership**
 - Content expanded—sports, politics, gossip
 - Number of newspapers grew
 - **Mostly a northern and western phenomenon**
 - Magazine market expanded (pg 475)

Education

- Literacy was widespread due to education
- Americans had **highest** literacy rate in the Western world
- **Most children learned to read in church or in private schools, from tutors, or from families**

Early Public Schools

- **Demand for public schools peaked in 1830s**
 - Workingmen's party called for free education to give their children opportunity at American Dream
 - Education would reduce crime, improve manners, lessen poverty
- **Horace Mann of Massachusetts led early drive for statewide school system**
 - Sponsored creation of state board of education

- Training of teachers
- **North Carolina led the way to state-supported education in the South**
 - Four months of school due to farmwork
 - Aristocratic pretensions: South had higher percentage of college students, more white illiterates, many young people
- **Conditions of public schools was not ideal**
 - Insufficient funds, teachers poorly paid
 - Higher education was private
 - Public high school became well established only after the Civil War

Higher Education

- **Post-Revolutionary proliferation of colleges continued**
 - Mostly affiliated with religious denomination
 - **Desire for state-supported universities flourished in the south**
 - **Federal policy abetted spread of universities in the West**
- **Coexistence of religious and state colleges conflicted**
 - Conflict over funds
 - Religious schools emphasized theology over sciences
 - University of Virginia geared study toward occupations—served as model
- **Technical education grew slowly**
 - West Point and US Naval Academy trained a limited number of engineers
 - More learned from apprenticeships
- **Elementary school for girls was accepted, but nothing beyond that**
 - Some female seminaries grew into colleges
 - More attention to music and art
 - Vasar in New York was first to give priority to academic standards
 - **In general, West gave the greatest impetus to coeducation**
 - One admitted, female students remained subordinate
 - Coeducation did not mean equality

Antebellum Reform

- **Reformers tackled such issues as observance of the Sabbath, dueling, crime and punishment, hours and conditions of work, poverty, vice, care of the disabled, pacifism, foreign missions, temperance, women's rights, abolition of slavery**

Temperance

- **Temperance crusade was the most widespread**
 - Religious concern
 - Affects on body and mind
 - Affect on the workforce
 - Relations between drinking and poverty
 - Suffering of mothers and children
- **American Society for the Promotion of Temperance**

- Lectures, press campaigns, essay contests, local and state societies
- Those who took the pledge put “T” by signature—teetotaler
- Was the goal moderation or total abstinence?—internal tensions
- Asserted that liquor traffic was morally wrong
- Called for abstinence of all alcohol—too bold, lost popularity

- **Demand for prohibition led to more regulations**

- Limit to amount that could be sold at a time
- Most laws were poorly drafted and vulnerable to court challenge
- **Overall, per capita consumption decreased**

Prisons and Asylums

- **Romantic ideal that people were innately good brought changes in treatment of prisoners and the disabled**
 - Public institutions arose
 - In colonial period, prisons were for short storage until punishment
 - Penitentiary developed: place of rehabilitation
 - **Auburn Penitentiary:** separate cells, severe discipline, prisoners were secure from abuse from other prisoners, repentance in isolation, solitary repentance
- **It was more common for prisoners to be thrown together without organization**
 - In early days, jails housed mainly debtors. Later on, they were together with convicts.
 - No state eliminated the practice, although New York set minimum debt that would warrant arrest
- **Care for the insane became more prevalent**
 - Pennsylvania Hospital
 - Separated from criminals
- **Dorothea Dix** was main voice for the mentally ill
 - Was prompted to act by the conditions in East Cambridge House of Corrections
 - She conducted investigations and won support
 - Helped transform social attitudes toward mental illness

Women’s Rights

- **Reform efforts gave middle-class women a chance to enter public life**
 - Catherine Beecher—leader in education movement, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*
 - Cult of domesticity
 - Argued that women should be trained in domestic arts but upheld standards of education for women
- **Gender roles**
 - Economic production became separate from the home
 - Cult of domesticity provided freedom from the outside world for women
- **Official status for women remained the same**
 - Barred from ministry and most professions
 - Higher education was hardly an option
 - Could not serve on juries, no vote
 - No control of property or children
 - Could not make a will, could not sign a contract, could not sue without husband consent
 - Same as a slave
- **Gradual protest for women’s rights**

- **Protest originated in 1840 when anti-slavery split into women**
- **Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Stanton**
 - Called convention to discuss women's rights
 - **Seneca Falls Convention: issued Declaration of Sentiments—proclaimed women and men are created equal**
- **Annual conventions were held**
 - Petitioning, lecturing, organizing continued
 - Movement struggled due to insufficient funds
 - Success depended on bold women
 - Susan B. Anthony
 - Movement won prominent male supporters
 - Emerson, Whitman, Channing, Garrison
- **Women did not gain right to vote but won some legal gains**
 - Control of property—Mississippi was first

Utopian Communities

- **Pursuit of utopian societies endured**
- **Shakers (United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing)**
 - Ann Lee's (Mother Ann) visions, premonitions
 - Ritualistic dances—"shakers"
 - **Doctrine held that God was a dual personality:** in Christ the masculine side was manifested; in Mother Ann, the feminine element
 - Movement spread through New England
 - **Governance of the colonies was concentrated in the hands of select groups chosen by "Head of Influence"** at Mount Lebanon
 - Shaker farms were leading source of seed and herb
 - Reached peak activity between 1830 and 1860
- **Oneida Community had different ideals**
 - John Humphrey Noyes: gathered a group of "Perfectionists"
 - Announced doctrine of "complex marriage": every man in community was married to every women in community, and vice versa
 - "free love" theology
 - Farming, logging, trapping, tableware manufacture
 - Universal marriage was abandoned , **converted to joint-stock company—Oneida Community**
- **New Harmony was based on secular principle**
 - Robert Owen built a utopian factory system
 - Supported labor legislation
 - *A New View of Society*
 - Founded city of New Harmony
 - Owen turned over leadership to residents and two officers
 - Fell into discord
- **Brook Farm in Massachusetts was the most celebrated utopian society**
 - Had the support of Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - Nathaniel Hawthorne was a member, memorialized its failure in *The Blithedale Romance*

- George Ripley, Unitarian minister and transcendentalist, conceived Brook Farm
 - Plan survived due to excellent community school
 - Main building burned down, spirit of community dissolved
- **Utopian communities failed quickly, with some exceptions**
 - Little effect on the outside world
- Human bondage became presiding issue—abolitionism