

Reform & Culture in Antebellum America: 1790-1860

I. The Second Great Awakening

- A. State of American religion in early 18th century
1. 75% of Americans attended church regularly
 2. Protestantism remained the dominant form of Christianity.
 2. Many, however, had become more liberal in their thinking
 - a. Rationalist (Enlightenment) ideas of the French Revolution era remained influential.
 - b. **Deism**, promoted by Thomas Paine, influenced T. Jefferson, B. Franklin & other "children" of the Enlightenment.
 - i. Relied on reason rather than revelation; on science rather than the Bible.
 - ii. Rejected concept of original sin and denied Christ's divinity.
 - iii. Believed in a Supreme Being who created a knowable universe and endowed human beings with a capacity for moral behavior.
 - c. **Unitarianism**: Inspired by deism; an important break from Puritanism
 - i. Believed God exists in one person and not the Trinity (Father, Son & Holy Spirit)
 - ii. Stressed the essential goodness of human nature rather than evil nature.
 - iii. Believed in free will and salvation through good works
 - iv. Saw God as loving Father, not a stern creator
 - d. Unitarianism appealed to intellectuals like Ralph Waldo Emerson who championed rationalism and optimism

B. Impact of the Second Great Awakening

1. Reaction to growing liberalism (deism, unitarianism) in religion beginning around 1800.
 - a. Began on the southern frontier but spread to northeastern cities -- Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky, 1801, marked the beginning
 - b. Perhaps the most important era in the history of American religion
 - c. Influenced more people than the First Great Awakening
2. Effects
 - a. Hundreds of thousands became "born-again" Christians
 - b. Shattered and reorganized churches into new sects.
 - c. Fostered new reform movements: Abolitionism, temperance, women's rights, public education, etc.
3. Revivalism spread to the masses via "camp meetings"
 - a. As many as 25,000 persons gathered for several days to hear hellfire gospel.

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- b. Methodists and Baptists benefited most from revivalism.
 - i. Both sects stressed personal conversion (contrary to Puritan doctrine of Predestination)
 - ii. Both had relatively democratic control of church affairs.
 - iii. Both stressed emotionalism in sermons
- 4. **Peter Cartwright** was the best known of Methodist "**circuit riders**" (traveling preachers)
- 5. **Charles Grandison Finney**: greatest of the revival preachers
 - a. Believed in earthly perfectionism (Puritan strain of thought)
 - b. Inspired major reform movements: Education, temperance, and abolitionism
- 6. The Methodist and Baptist Churches became the two largest Protestant denominations in the U.S.

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C. New sects

- 1. "**Burned-Over District**" (Western NY): Many New England Puritans settled there and the region became known for its "hellfire and damnation" sermons
 - Fragmentation occurred; new sects included Adventists and Mormons
- 2. **Adventists** (Millerites) had several hundred thousand members.
 - a. William Miller predicted Christ would return on Oct 22, 1844.
 - b. Even though the "millennium" never came, the movement continued to grow.
- 3. **Mormons**
 - a. **Joseph Smith** founded **Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints** in 1830 and wrote the Book of Mormon after having experienced a revelation.
 - Mormons founded in "Burned-Over District"
 - b. Mormons were persecuted in Ohio, then in Missouri & Illinois.
 - i. Practice of polygamy created enemies
 - ii. 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered by a mob in Illinois.
 - c. **Brigham Young** led the Mormons to Salt Lake City, Utah, 1846-47
 - i. Mormon community prospered as a frontier theocracy and cooperative commonwealth.
 - ii. Cultivated the semi-arid Utah by effective & cooperative methods of irrigation.
 - d. Mormons later broke polygamy laws passed by Congress in 1862 & 1882.
 - As a result, Utah was refused statehood until 1896, after it had abandoned polygamy
- 4. Wealthier, better-educated levels of society were not as affected by revivalism (e.g. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Unitarians).

5. Poorer communities in the rural South and West were the most affected by religious revivalism (by Methodists, Baptists & others)
6. The slavery issue split Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians along sectional lines.
 - The secession of southern churches foreshadowed the secession of southern states.

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II. Age of Reform

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

1. Many reformers held the old Puritan view of perfectionism (the belief in creating a perfect society by following God's laws).
2. Many reformers who held traditional values were troubled by the modernization of society.
3. Women were vital in the reform movements, especially in their quest for suffrage.
 - Movements offered many middle-class women opportunities to escape the "cult of domesticity" and take part in public life.
4. Major Issues
 - a. Abolition of slavery (most important reform movement -- see next chapter)
 - b. Temperance
 - c. Women's rights
 - d. Education reform
 - e. Mental institutions (sought improvements)
 - f. Prison reform (sought reformatories rather than punitive institutions)
 - g. Debtors prisons (sought to end imprisonment for debt)
 - h. Wilderness utopias (sought to create ideal societies)

Memory Aid: **A Totally Wicked Elephant Made People Devour Worms**

B. **Temperance**

1. Alcohol abuse was rampant in 19th-century America ("the Alcoholic Republic")
 - a. Alcoholism decreased the efficiency of labor while increasing injuries in the workplace.
 - b. Women and children were vulnerable to physical abuse by a drunken husband or father.
2. American Temperance Society (formed in Boston in 1826)
 - a. Led by Lyman Beecher
 - b. Within a few years about 1,000 local groups emerged.
 - c. Urged drinkers to give up alcohol
 - d. Organized children's clubs.
 - e. T.S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Barroom and What I Saw There*

- (1854) depicted how a stable village was adversely transformed by a new tavern in town.
-- Was the second best seller of the 1850s (behind Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*)
3. Two major strategies of reformers in early battles against alcohol
 - a. **Temperance**: promoted moderate use of alcohol rather than abstinence
 - b. Prohibition -- Make alcohol illegal
 - i. **Dow Law: Neal S. Dow** "Father of Prohibition" sponsored the **Maine Law of 1851**
-- Prohibited the manufacture and sale of liquor.
 - ii. By 1857, 12 states had passed various prohibitory laws.
 - iii. Yet, during the 1850s, many prohibition laws were repealed or overturned.
 4. Results of the temperance movement
 - a. Much less drinking among women than earlier in the century
 - b. Less per capita consumption of hard liquor.
 - i. Due in large part to changing nature of society due to the market revolution
 - ii. Panic of 1837 reduced demand for alcohol
 - iii. Temperance movement eventually proved influential
 5. Temperance was the least sectional of all the reform movements.

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C. Women's Rights

1. Gender lines more sharply drawn in the 19th century due to the Industrial Revolution. (See "The Changing Family" below)
 - a. The "market revolution" separated men and women into distinct economic roles.
 - b. Women were viewed physically and emotionally weak but also as artistic and refined.
 - c. "**Republican Motherhood**"
 - i. Emerged during the American Revolutionary era and dominated society's views toward women until the "market revolution" emerged
 - ii. Women were seen as keepers of society's conscience with a special responsibility to raise children to become productive citizens loyal to the republic.
 - d. The "cult of domesticity" came to dominate middle-class views (and to a smaller extent, working class views) of women's "proper" role in society)
 - e. The revivalism of the Second Great Awakening reinforced the traditional view of women as the guardians of morality in the home ("an angel in the house").
 - f. Some women sought to break away from role of homemaker ("angel in the home") and participate in public world of men.

2. Female reformers advocated women's suffrage and other rights for women
 - a. Also participated in the general reform movements of the age such as temperance & abolitionism
 - A turning point occurred when women were excluded from the first World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London.
 - b. **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**
 - i. Urged equality for women, legal rights to sue, right to own property.
 - ii. Sought end to *feme covert* where a husband took control of his wife's property upon marriage.
 - c. **Lucretia Mott**: Along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, organized the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848
 - d. **Susan B. Anthony**
 - Quaker; protégé of Stanton; militant lecturer for woman's rights
 - e. **Grimké sisters**
 - i. **Angelina Grimké** -- Southern abolitionist and women's rights advocate
 - ii. **Sara Grimké** -- Powerful writer on behalf of women's rights movement.
 - iii. Their role in the abolitionist movement created a bridge between that movement and the new women's rights movement (supported by William Lloyd Garrison)
 - f. **Lucy Stone** -- Helped organize first national women's rights convention in 1850.
 - i. Avid abolitionist
 - ii. After the war, created women's-only suffrage organization
 - iii. Retained her maiden name after she was married
 - Women who follow her example are known as "Lucy Stoners"
 - g. Amelia Bloomer: Popularized short skirt with Turkish trousers
 - "Bloomers" were challenged as too masculine and immoral.
 - h. Margaret Fuller: Edited a transcendentalist journal, *The Dial*.
 - Wrote that women were the spiritual and artistic equal of men
3. **Seneca Falls Convention** (1848) also "Women's Rights Convention"
 - a. Launched the modern women's rights movement
 - i. Organized by Stanton and Mott
 - ii. Attended by 61 women and 34 men
 - b. "Declaration of Sentiments": stated that "...all men *and women* are created equal."
 - i. Demanded women's' suffrage.
 - ii. Sought property ownership for women within a marriage.
 - iii. Sought increased child custody rights for women
 - c. The mainstream press and churches was strongly opposed

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4. The women's rights movement was overshadowed by abolitionism and the Civil War.
5. Gains for women prior to the Civil War
 - a. Women were gradually admitted to college
 - b. Starting in Mississippi in 1839 and New York in the late 1840s, women could own property after they married.
 - c. After 1860, some states passed laws that enabled women to work or own a business independently of their family and keep their own earnings separate from their family accounts.

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D. Education

1. Public Education
 - a. Reformers saw public education as a way to instill strong Protestant morality and republican values in children
 - b. **Horace Mann:** most important educational reformer of the age
 - i. Argued key to reform in U.S. society was better education
 - ii. Established state normal schools to better train teachers in Massachusetts
 - iii. His influence spread to other states and impressive improvements were made prior to the Civil War.
 - c. Tax-supported public education triumphed between 1820 and 1850 in the East and West (less so in the South)
 - i. Laborers in workingmen's movements in eastern cities increasingly demanded education for their children.
 - ii. Increased manhood suffrage meant workers pushed for free education for their children.
 - iii. Wealthy citizens gradually supported free public education as they saw education as a means to promote order and moral reform among the lower class.
 - d. Despite gains, some resistance to compulsory public education remained
 - i. Some working-class families needed their children to work rather than going to school.
 - ii. Secondary education lagged behind elementary education
 - iii. Slaves were forbidden to learn reading or writing; even free northern blacks were usually excluded from schools
 - iv. The bulging Catholic population resisted the Protestant moralizing of public schools and opted for Catholic parochial schools
2. **Noah Webster** (1758-1843)
 - a. Published the first American English dictionary
 - His dictionary helped standardize American English
 - b. His readers and grammar books were used by millions of children in 19th century
 - Largely designed to promote morality and patriotism

3. **William H. McGuffey** (1800-1873)
 - a. Grade school readers were first published in 1830's; sold 120 million copies between 1836 and 1960
 - b. Lessons emphasized morality, patriotism, and idealism as well as punctuality, sobriety and frugality.
4. Higher Education
 - a. 2nd Great Awakening led to the creation of many small, denominational, liberal arts colleges, mostly in the South & West.
 - b. Women's schools gained some respectability in the 1820s.
 - i. Emma Willard established in 1821 the Troy (NY) Female Seminary.
 - ii. Oberlin College opened to both men and women in 1837, as well as blacks.
5. Lyceums: provided venues for traveling lecturers in science, literature, & moral philosophy; 3,000 lyceum lecture associations existed by 1835.
 - In contrast to morally-oriented public schools, lyceums encouraged independent thinking and new ideas.

E. **Dorothea Dix** worked to improve treatment of the mentally handicapped.

1. One of most successful reformers of the age
2. Reported horrible conditions in prisons, poorhouses and basements where the insane were often kept in chains.
3. Efforts resulted in improved conditions and influenced the view that the insane were not willfully perverse but mentally ill.
 - 15 states created new hospitals and asylums as a result.

F. Prison reforms

1. Gave inmates increased access to religious services
2. Increasingly shifted to rehabilitation rather than punishment
3. Groundbreaking institutions at Auburn, New York and Philadelphia gained world renown for humanitarian practices.
 - a. Isolated inmates so as to keep them from being adversely influenced by other convicts
 - b. Prison officials served as moral advisers
4. Ultimately, prison reforms were largely unsuccessful due to overcrowding, brutal punishment, and inadequate training of prison personnel

G. Practice of imprisoning people for debts was reduced significantly

1. In 1833, the federal government outlawed federal imprisonment for unpaid debts.
2. Most states abolished the practice in response

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H. Wilderness Utopias

1. Various reformers set up more than 40 communities of a cooperative, communistic, or "communitarian" nature.
 - Disillusioned by materialistic and rapidly industrialized society
2. 1825, **New Harmony**, Indiana: about 1,000 persons led by Robert Owen
 - Communitarian society founded the first American kindergarten, the first free public school, and the first free public library.
3. **Brook Farm** in Massachusetts was founded by a group of transcendentalists and lasted between 1841 & 1846
 - a. Formed cooperative community with members working the common lands and devoting time to spiritual matters.
 - b. Several well-known American authors lived there at various times including Nathaniel Hawthorne.
4. **Oneida Colony** founded in NY in 1848; more radical
 - a. Believed the Second Coming of Christ had already taken place
 - Sought a new form of perfectionism based on a new morality
 - b. Practiced free love, birth control, and eugenic selection of parents to produce superior offspring.
 - i. Believed in corporate marriage of all members to each other.
 - ii. Communal care of children; sexual equality
 - c. Colony flourished for over 30 years largely due to its production of superior steel traps and the manufacturing of silver plates.
5. **Shakers** -- United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing
 - a. Established in communistic society in Lebanon, New York.
 - b. Believed Christ's return was imminent
 - c. Longest-lived sect beginning in 1774; finally extinct in 1940.
 - Mother Ann Lee transplanted the movement in America from her native England
 - d. Set up about 20 religious communities; 6,000 members in 1840
 - e. Believed in sexual equality
 - d. Opposition to both marriage and free love led to their eventual extinction.
 - i. Believed in celibacy, equal spiritual value of men and women, and simplicity of architecture and furnishings.
 - ii. New members were adopted as orphans or recruited through conversion.
6. **Amana Community** founded in Iowa in 1855
 - a. Perfectionist communal society; believed in the imminent millennium (similar to Millerites)
 - b. Manufacturing business from community still in existence.
7. Mormons considered by some to be a utopian society – most successful

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III. The Changing American Family (*see study guide on page 10 below*)

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- A. Women increasingly challenged their inferior status.
 - 1. Women better off in U.S. than in Europe especially on the frontier where women were more scarce.
 - 2. Increased numbers of women avoided marriage; 10% by 1860
 - 3. Women began working as schoolteachers and in domestic service.
 - a. 10% of white women worked 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 had large moral power and influence in family affairs.
 - 3. **Godey's Lady's Book**: magazine founded in 1830, survived until 1898; promoted the "cult of domesticity"
 - a. Most widely circulated magazine in the U.S. prior to the Civil War
 - b. Circulation reached a staggering 150,000.
 - 4. **Catherine Beecher** (sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe)
 - a. Major proponent of having female teachers in public education.
 - b. Major proponent of the cult of domesticity
 - i. Called on American inventors to improve life for homemakers
 - ii. Ironically, labor-saving inventions made many women's lives more challenging as more work was expected of them.

- C. Changes in the family
 - 1. Most marriages were based on love, not "arrangement".
 - 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 century.
 - b. Contraception practiced (although seldom discussed in public)
 - 3. Smaller families meant child-centered families
 - Corporal punishment reduced; more emphasis on shaping than breaking.
 - 4. Children raised to be independent and moral individuals.
 - 5. Outlines of the "modern family" were clear by mid-century.

IV. The frontier experience as part of the American character

A. **Alexis de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835):**

Individualism and equality characterized antebellum American.

-- Compared to life in the East, western life was extremely rough;
westerners were generally more "crude"; highly individualistic

B. Democracy on the frontier

1. Equality reigned on the frontier; (except slavery)
2. White manhood suffrage
3. Cherished states' rights and localism
4. Intensely patriotic and nationalistic

C. **Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893)**

- Saw the western frontier as forging the American character

VIEWS CONCERNING AMERICAN WOMEN UP TO 1860

View of Women	Characteristics
<p><u>Colonial Period</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ were seen as morally inferior to men and prone to temptation (e.g. Eve had tempted Adam in the Garden of Eden) ○ enjoyed few legal rights
<p><u>Republican Motherhood (c. 1765-c. 1830)</u></p> <p><i>Dominant view of women prior to the Industrial Revolution (where a vast majority of Americans lived in rural areas)</i></p> <p>Opponents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abigail Adams • Mercy Otis Warren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gained respect by helping win the American Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boycotts of English goods ▪ Manufactured own goods ▪ Daughters of Liberty ▪ Deborah Sampson ○ were seen as morally equal to men ○ were to raise virtuous and loyal citizens for the republic ○ were an indispensable economic factor in the success of the family farm ○ gained few legal rights, however <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>feme covert</i> remained in effect ▪ husbands had full custody rights ▪ no female suffrage
<p><u>Cult of Domesticity: Antebellum era—19th Century</u></p> <p><i>Emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution.</i></p> <p><i>“Separate spheres” between men and women became more common.</i></p> <p>Advocates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelists of the 2nd Great Awakening • Catherine Beecher • <i>Godey’s Lady’s Book</i> <p style="text-align: center;">Opponents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s rights movement • Liberal colleges: Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women were seen the moral backbone of society (“an angel in the house”) • Women were to make the home a haven/refuge for their husbands while raising moral children • Middle- and upper-class women were not allowed to work after marriage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Young women were encouraged to teach (until marriage) • Working-class women, immigrants and black women commonly worked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. Lowell Girls • Enjoyed few legal rights
<p><u>Women’s Rights Movement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seneca Falls Convention (1848): “Declaration and Sentiments” • Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Margaret Fuller, Amelia Bloomer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some women joined reform movements: temperance, abolitionism, women’s rights • Women gained increased property rights after marriage (starting in Mississippi in 1837 and New York in the 1840s) • Earnings laws in some states after 1860 resulted in modest gains for businesswomen

Terms to Know

Deism Unitarianism Second Great Awakening camp meetings "circuit riders" Peter Cartwright Charles Grandison Finney "Burnt-Over District" Adventists Mormons Joseph Smith Brigham Young perfectionism abolitionism temperance movement Maine Law of 1851, Neal Dow Republican Motherhood Lucretia Mott Elizabeth Cady Stanton Susan B. Anthony Angelina Grimké Sarah Grimké	Lucy Stone Amelia Bloomer Margaret Fuller Seneca Falls Convention, 1848 Dorothea Dix Horace Mann Noah Webster William H. McGuffey wilderness utopias New Harmony, Indiana Brook Farm, Massachusetts Oneida colony Shakers Amana Community cult of domesticity <i>Godey's Ladiesbook</i> Catherine Beecher Alexis de Toqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in U.S. History"
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Essay Questions

Note: This sub-unit is a high probability area for the AP exam. In the past 10 years, 3 questions have come wholly or in part from the material in this chapter. Below are some questions that will help you study the topics that have appeared on previous exams.

1. Analyze the extent to which the Second Great Awakening transformed American religion in the years prior to the Civil War.
2. Identify major reform movements of the Second Great Awakening. To what extent were reformers during the Second Great Awakening successful in achieving their goals?
3. Analyze the changing views of women in America from the Revolutionary era to the Civil War. What factors were responsible for changing women's roles? Which social classes were most affected?

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