

# Chapter 15 (14th)

## The Ferment of Reform and Culture

1. Reviving Religion
  1. By 1850, America's a mostly church-going country. 75% of Americans attended church regularly.
    1. The church-going nature of America was noted by French observer **Alexis de Tocqueville** during a visit.
  2. New religions challenged Christianity, however.
    1. **Deism** sprang out of the Enlightenment (AKA "Age of Reason") and was based on scientific or logical reasoning rather than faith. Convincing differences with Christianity...
      1. Faith (belief in what can't be proven) was rejected as silly superstition.
      2. Deism rejected the "divinity of Christ."
    2. The "Scientific Revolution" also sparked deism. Just as the solar system, mathematics, and physical laws and properties of the universe were being figured out, the principles of scientific inquiry were applied to religion.
      1. Deism believed in a supreme being who'd made the universe, like a great clockmaker. It contained all of its order, put it into motion, then stood back and let the mechanisms run. Man's "job" was to figure it all out.
      2. Well-known deists were Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine (who literally wrote *The Age of Reason* which outlined deism and attacked the Bible).
    3. The **Unitarian** religion drew followers even farther away from Christianity. Unitarians...
      1. Believed God existed in 1 person ("uni"), but not in the Holy Trinity.
      2. Rejected the divinity of Christ.
      3. Believed people were essentially good at heart, not born under "original sin."
      4. Believed people were saved through "good works", not through faith in Christ.
      5. Attracted intellectual types, notably **Ralph Waldo Emerson**.
  3. Perversions of Christianity ignited Christians to "take back their faith" & oppose the new beliefs.
    1. A Christian revival movement began around 1800. It reached full speed as the **2nd Great Awakening** in the 1830's.
    2. The 2nd Great Awakening was like the first (which occurred 100 years prior) in that it was a rural movement (taking place in "camp meetings"), it was emotional, appealing to the common classes, and was a national movement.
    3. It was unique in that it spawned a series of other movements: prison reform, temperance (movement to ban alcohol), and abolition of slavery.
    4. Missionaries went westward in attempt to Christianize Native Americans.
    5. Methodists and Baptists were the big winners in the movement. They each stressed a personal relationship with Christ and the emotional nature of the Awakening thus helped those denominations.
    6. Leading preachers of the 2nd Great Awakening were **Peter Cartwright**, a Methodist circuit rider traveling from town to town preaching, and **Charles Grandison Finney** who was the most gifted speaker/preacher and could move the masses.
    7. The 2nd Great Awakening started many reform movements including public education, temperance (not drinking alcohol), women's suffrage (right to vote), prison reform, and better treatment for the mentally handicapped.
2. Denominational Diversity
  1. Western New York became known as the "**Burned-Over District**" due to the hellfire of its revival preaching.
  2. Other religious sects were spawned.
    1. The "**Millerites**" (AKA Adventists) predicted Christ's return on October 22, 1844. When this prophesy failed to materialize, the movement lost credibility.
    2. The **Mormon** faith would also begin at this time.
  3. The gap between the classes and regions were widened by the 2nd Great Awakening.
    1. Usually, poor, less-educated, Southerners or Westerners became Methodist or Baptist.
    2. Generally, the wealthier, urban, more-educated, Easterner or person on the coastline stayed Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, or became Unitarian.
    3. Slavery was a divisive issue to the churches (the Methodist and Presbyterian churches split over this).
3. A Desert Zion in Utah

1. In 1830, **Joseph Smith** claimed to find golden tablets in NY with the *Book of Mormon* inscribed on them. He thus came up with "Mormon or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."
2. Mormons ran into troubles with their neighbors due to polygamy (having multiple wives), drilling a militia, and voting as a block.
  1. Joseph Smith was killed in a skirmish. **Brigham Young** took over and led the Mormons along the "Mormon Trail" to Utah.
3. The Mormons quickly grew in number due to high birth rates.
4. The issue of polygamy delayed Utah's statehood until 1896.
4. Free School for a Free People
  1. Free public education was not popular in the early 1800's.
    1. Opponents of compulsory (mandatory) education questioned why their tax money should go to teach another person's child.
  2. Jacksonian democracy forced the public opinion to begin to change.
    1. More and more people could now vote. Youngsters would soon be voters and thus "run the country." The idea of a nation of uneducated illiterates was not appealing. They needed to be educated.
    2. Also, it was viewed as cheaper to educate now, rather than pay for prisoners in jail later.
  3. Teachers were not the best, however. They were often ill-educated and ill-trained themselves.
  4. **Horace Mann** became known as the "Father of Public Education." He pushed for free compulsory education and education that strayed from just "dead languages" to more "hands-on" education and the "3 R's."
  5. Unfortunately in the education movement, African-Americans were largely ignored.
  6. Two mountains in the education world were...
    1. **Noah Webster** who wrote his *Blueback Speller* and dictionary. His lessons were mixed with grammar and moral lessons.
    2. **William H. McGuffey** author of *McGuffey's Reader*, read by nearly every schoolchild. The *Reader* also contained both English lessons as well as patriotic and moral lessons.
5. Higher Goals for Higher Learning
  1. The 2nd Great Awakening spawned educational reform.
    1. New colleges sprung up in the West (Ohio Valley) and the South.
    2. The curriculum was often traditional: classical languages of Latin and Greek, Math, and moral philosophy.
  2. The first state-supported university was founded in the Tar Heel state, the **University of North Carolina**, in 1795; Jefferson started the University of Virginia shortly afterwards (UVA was to be independent of religion or politics).
  3. Higher education for women had long been taboo. The feeling was such education corrupted women, in turn, corrupting the children and families. New colleges for women began to emerge...
    1. **Troy Female Seminary** was established by **Emma Willard** in 1821.
    2. **Mount Holyoke Seminary** was established by **Mary Lyon** in 1837.
  4. Also, working adults craved less formalized education. There was a boom in libraries, lyceums (public lectures as given by Ralph Waldo Emerson), and magazines.
6. An Age of Reform
  1. The reform movement was widespread and sought to halt cruelty, war, alcohol ("temperance"), discrimination, and slavery.
  2. Women were often the motivators behind these reform movements. They were inspired by the 2nd Great Awakening & felt it the duty as rulers of the home/family to rid society of these vices.
    1. These ladies were sometimes criticized as being naïve, but they were certainly motivated and believed in what they were doing.
  3. The view on prisons was softened. The movement was away from punishment, toward reform.
    1. Debtor prisons were abolished. This was due to the fact that, by this time, most workers (debtors) could vote.
    2. Criminal codes and penalties were softened in hopes of reforming the wrong-doer.
  4. **Dorothea Dix** sought and got improved treatment for the mentally insane. Prior to her work, mental insanity was viewed as a choice and was dealt with harshly. She brought the terrible treatment to light and got changes made.
  5. Pacifists (those seeking peace) spoke up. The **American Peace Society** was led by William Ladd. His message was lost when the Civil War erupted, but the fruits of his seed would show up in the 1900's (with the League of Nations and then U.N.).
7. Demon Rum—The "Old Deluder"
  1. Reformers wanted to ban alcohol and end drunkenness. The thought was that the men would waste their week's wages in the bars, missed work, beat the women, destroy the families, and ruin the Christian family. Therefore, the women led this movement.

2. The **American Temperance Society** was founded in Boston, 1826. Local chapters began to emerge. They used a variety of methods to encourage temperance (discourage drinking).
3. Novelist T.S. Arthur wrote *Ten Nights in a Barroom and What I Saw There* which described how a bar ruined a small town. It became a play and was second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (another "reformer" novel).
4. The war on alcohol had a two-pronged attack...
  1. Remove the desire to drink—thus they stressed "temperance" (drinking only a bit and occasionally) rather than "teetotalism" (not drinking at all).
  2. Punish those who did drink—thus they strengthened laws. Neal S. Dow sponsored the Maine Law of 1851 which prohibited alcohol's sale or manufacture. Other states followed (though legal battles also followed the laws).
8. Women in Revolt
  1. Although women generally had better life than in Europe, they were expected to stay at home.
    1. French observer **Alexis de Tocqueville** noted that rape in America was punishable by death, whereas in his home of France it was usually overlooked.
  2. Some women didn't marry at all and become "spinsters."
  3. The idea was that women were emotionally and spiritually weaker than men. Men were seen as barbaric and uncivilized. It was also viewed as the duty of the women to civilize the men.
    1. The irony was that women were spiritually weak as well (why Satan came to Eve first) but supposedly somehow both pure and pious.
  4. Women had almost no role outside of the home, but they owned and ran the homes. This was called the "cult of domesticity."
  5. The women had leaders...
    1. **Catherine Beecher** urged women to take teaching jobs (until they married).
    2. **Lucretia Mott**, **Susan B. Anthony**, and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** all pushed for women's suffrage (right to vote).
    3. **Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell** became the first female doctor, **Amelia Bloomer** wore short skirts (bloomers), **Margaret Fuller** edited a transcendentalist journal, the **Grimke sisters** pushed for the abolition of slavery.
  6. The greatest first-step in women's rights was taken with the **Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention** (1848) in New York.
    1. A "**Declaration of Sentiments**" arguing that "all men *and women* were created equal."
    2. It demanded female suffrage.
    3. Neither of these happened anytime soon, but the women's rights movement was born.
9. Wilderness Utopias
  1. During the boom of reform, several utopia (perfect society) experiments were tried but failed.
  2. **Robert Owen** started **New Harmony, Indiana** (1825). It attracted intellectual types but failed due to infighting and confusion.
  3. The **Brook Farm** was started in Massachusetts (1841). It attracted Transcendentalist intellectuals. It kept its head above water for 5 years, then a major building burnt down and the whole thing was lost to debt.
  4. The **Oneida Community** started in NY (1848). A couple of "kooky" things went along with it...
    1. It was communal and embraced free love, birth control, and selecting parents to have planned children.
    2. Though started as a communistic-style project, it was capitalism that saved it. They started selling baskets for a profit. Then, they sold flatware and cutlery (today, the Oneida company is still a huge seller of forks, spoons, and knives).
  5. The **Shakers** were begun by Mother Ann Lee as a religious sect. They stressed simplicity in their lives and separated the sexes. This led to them dying off by 1940.
10. The Dawn of Scientific Achievement
  1. During the formative years of the nations, Americans were concerned with practical matters and science, *not* pure or theoretical sciences.
    1. Thomas Jefferson invented a new and better plow.
    2. **Nathaniel Bowditch** wrote on navigation.
    3. **Matthew Maury** studied the ocean winds and currents.
    4. **Benjamin Silliman** was a Yale chemist and geologist for 50+ years.
    5. **Louis Agassiz**, a Harvard biologist, stressed original research over rote memorization.
    6. **Asa Gray** was a Harvard botanist and was a pioneer of botany.
    7. **John Audubon** was an early naturalist who painted birds with precise details. He is the namesake of today's "Audubon Society" that studies birds.
  2. Medicine was primitive at the time.
    1. Common "cures" were bleeding (often with leeches) and purging (using laxatives).

2. The village blacksmith or butcher was often the doctor or surgeon.
3. Knowledge of sanitation was very lacking, if at all. Disease obviously resulted.
4. Medicines were ridiculous "cure-alls" which usually consisted mostly of alcohol.
  1. **Dr. Oliver Wendall Holmes** said that if all the medicines were thrown into the sea, the people would be better off and the fish worse.

#### 11. Artistic Achievements

1. U.S. had traditionally imitated European styles of art (aristocratic subjects, dark portraits of important people or gods, stormy landscapes).
2. There was a Greek revival in architecture in the early 1800's after Greece won its independence from the Turks.
  1. By 1850 a Gothic revival began with its pointed arches.
  2. Thomas Jefferson was the premier architect of the day. His best works being his home (Monticello) and the University of Virginia.
3. Artists were looked upon as time-wasters. They were either wasting time which they could use to actually *do* something or they had too much pride and were eager to show off their work. Some painters did come on the scene...
  1. **Gilbert Stuart** painted many portraits of George Washington.
  2. **Charles Willson Peale** also painted George Washington.
  3. **John Trumbull** painted scenes of the Revolutionary War.
  4. These paintings were still done in a "European style." A distinct American flavor would come later.
4. In music, "darker tunes" were popular. They were nostalgic, rhythmic, and yet stereotypical of African-Americans.
  1. **Stephen Foster's** songs were the most famous, especially *Old Folks at Home*, better known as *Suwanee River*.

#### 12. The Blossoming of a National Literature

1. Up until this point, American "literature" was either...
  1. Political or practical in nature like *Common Sense*, *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Federalist Papers*, or *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Or...
  2. Imitative of European writings either in style, subject matter, or both.
2. By the 1830's or so, American writing truly became American, both in style and in subject matter. Just as politics had revolted against the Old World, culture was now doing so. The old saying is that "art imitates life," and America was thinking of themselves truly as Americans.
  1. The "Knickerbocker group" exemplified this new American writing.
    1. **Washington Irving** wrote *Knickerbocker's History of New York* and *The Sketch Book* including "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." The setting was in the U.S.
    2. **James Fenimore Cooper** wrote what might be considered the first of blockbuster American fiction in *Leatherstocking Tales*. These stories told of Natty Bumppo, a frontiersman and his adventures, notably in *The Last of the Mohicans*. The setting was the wilderness of New York.
    3. **William Cullen Bryant** wrote poetry including "Thanatopsis." Europeans didn't think such quality poetry could be written on "this side of the water."

#### 13. Trumpeters of Transcendentalism

1. **Transcendentalism** was a New England intellectual movement that began to challenge ways of thinking. During the "Age of Reason," knowledge came from experimentation. John Locke had argued that knowledge came solely from the senses. The Transcendentalists said knowledge rises above (transcends) just the senses. People were thought to reach an inner light and touch the "Oversoul" (something akin to God).
2. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** was the most famous Transcendentalist.
  1. Emerson was a former Unitarian pastor turned writer and lyceum speaker.
  2. His most famous writing/speech was *Self Reliance* which stressed individualism. He also urged Americans to declare independence from Europe in terms of art, literature, thinking, etc.
  3. Emerson was the Transcendentalist with the credentials, success, and the "big name."
3. **Henry David Thoreau** was Emerson's friend and neighbor. Whereas Emerson *talked* about self reliance, Thoreau *lived* it.
  1. Tired of "modern" society, Thoreau spent two years living in the woods off of nothing but what he could make, grow, or trade for. Then he wrote the classic *Walden: Or Life in the Woods* describing his simple life there.

2. He also wrote *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* which emphasized peacefully *not* following unjust laws. This became a strong influence later on Mahatma Gandhi and then Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
  4. **Walt Whitman** was a saucy poet who wrote *Leaves of Grass*. He encouraged people to live their lives to the fullest and holler out a "barbaric yawp."
14. Glowing Literary Lights
1. **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** was an immensely popular poet with "Evangeline," "The Tales of Hiawatha," and "The Courtship of Miles Standish."
  2. **John Greenleaf Whittier** wrote poems that barked against social injustice like slavery.
  3. **James Russell Lowell** similarly wrote satirical poetry that criticized social wrongs, such as *Biglow Papers*.
  4. **Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes** was a poet who wrote "The Last Leaf" to honor the last "white Indian" of the Boston Tea Party.
  5. Women writers also made their mark.
    1. **Louisa May Alcott** grew up in Transcendentalist Concord, Mass. & wrote *Little Women*.
    2. **Emily Dickinson** wrote love poems, also in Massachusetts.
  6. **William Gillmore Simms** was known as "the Cooper of the South." He wrote of southern life during the American Revolution.
15. Literary Individualists and Dissenters
1. **Edgar Allan Poe** is often credited with inventing the "psychological thriller." His poems and stories often dealt with the ghostly and the macabre. Well-known works are "The Raven," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and many others.
  2. The imprint of Calvinist/Puritanical belief in original sin is undeniable in literature at this time.
    1. **Nathaniel Hawthorne** explored the idea of original sin wit works such as *The House of Seven Gables* and *The Scarlet Letter* where the heroine is condemned to wear a red "A" on her blouse to show her sin of adultery.
    2. **Herman Melville** wrote *Moby Dick*, the allegorical tale of good vs. evil. It follows the mad Captain Ahab's hell-bent quest to kill the white whale, Moby Dick.
16. Portrayers of the Past
1. **George Bancroft** helped found the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD and his history of the U.S. earned him the title of "Father of American History."
  2. **William H. Prescott** wrote histories detailing the conquests of Mexico and Peru.
  3. **Francis Parkman** wrote the history of England and France's struggle for control of N. America.
  4. Nearly always, the history books at this time were written by New Englanders. There was therefore a decidedly pro-North bias built in (much to the South's dismay).