

Chapter Thirteen: Antebellum Revival And Reform

Contents

Analyze the perfectionist tendencies of the movements of the 1820-1860 period.

Explain how the cultural movements of the nineteenth century (transcendentalism, Utopian communities, and the Cult of Domesticity) influenced American culture.

Explain how The Second Great Awakening influenced the anti-slavery movement and the women's rights movement.

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one of the Second Great Awakening's basic messages: humanity could be improved, and indeed, perfected through religion and reform.

One of the defining characteristics of the Second Great Awakening was large gatherings at religious revivals. The meetings typically lasted three to five days and were meant to reawaken or “revive” one’s religious faith through an intense, emotional experience. In part, this was achieved by a certain theatricality of preaching. Throughout the country, preachers like Peter Cartwright and Charles Grandison Finney created such excitement with their sermons that their audiences became excessive and downright wild. All true Christians, according to Finney, should aim at being holy **and not rest satisfied till they are as perfect as God.**¹ The religious music

changed over time and became more limiting and conservative in their views of race and gender. The Second Great Awakening swept through most of the country, but it took differing forms in the North and the South.

The Second Great Awakening in the South and in Appalachia

In Appalachia and the South, the Second Great Awakening brought a sense of community and provided entertainment in isolated rural and frontier areas. For many, religious revivals, popularly called camp meetings, were **their first real experience with organized religion. Camp meetings were so** called because, on the sparsely populated frontier, many attendees had to travel long distances to the meeting and camp out at the location. Camp meetings were a new form of religious expression for the United States. Their intense and emotional atmosphere inspired a tremendous number of conversions. The evangelical message that one's birth, education, wealth, and social status did not matter in the eyes of God held great appeal for the masses of the frontier. Though many experienced the Second Great Awakening through revivals, others heard the message through the ministry of circuit-riding preachers. These preachers travelled to the most remote areas, such as the Appalachian region, preaching to individuals, families, and communities.

Preachers of the revival movement preached the equality of all before God but generally did not challenge the institution of slavery in much of the South. For some, the issue initially boiled down to access to the slave population and the ability to bring the message to a wider audience. If they openly challenged the institution of slavery, slave owners would not allow their slaves to attend revival meetings or to hear the message. Indeed, many slave owners feared the message of spiritual equality, so they kept the evangelists out. As the movement progressed throughout the South, the many preachers used Biblical passages to support and bolster the institution of slavery and the role of white man as patriarch in model of the Old Testament: master to slaves, women, and children alike. Simultaneously, the slaves, women, and children were told that obedience to their master was their Christian duty. Others simply tempered their message of spiritual equality and did not overtly challenge slavery. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as the message changed to **reflect the prevailing ideas of the elite, the movement became more popular** in the South as slave owners not only attended meetings themselves, but allowed and even encouraged the attendance of the slave population.

Throughout the South, slaves attended camp meetings. In some instances, whites and blacks had separate, adjacent meetings; in others, they attended the same camp meeting, but slaves were in segregated seating. In either case, they often heard the same sermons, sang the same songs, and received the

same message. Revivals also created a widely known group of respected black leaders, many among them preachers associated with the movement. This is especially true of the Baptist church; independent black congregations were founded all over the South. For many slaves, the message was a promise of freedom, either in this world or in the afterlife.

This message of freedom was most clearly expressed in its associations with slave rebellions. Gabriel's Rebellion of 1800 grew in part out of a series of revival meetings in the area of Richmond, Virginia. Gabriel, a blacksmith, was often leased out to work for others; in this more relaxed system, he was able to move more freely and recruit conspirators, a pattern that was only enhanced by the summer's revival meetings. Additionally, some of the conspirators were recruited at the Hungary Baptist Meeting House, the church Gabriel and his brothers attended. Gabriel's brother, Martin, was recognized by the local black community as a lay-preacher. When one of the conspirators proved hesitant to rebellion, Gabriel called on his brother to speak at a meeting of the conspirators to encourage them to action: outright rebellion. Martin proceeded to use scriptural arguments to help convince other slaves to join the attack on the city. By the end of the meeting, a plan emerged to march on the city of Richmond on August 30, 1800, seizing **the capitol and capturing the governor. Significantly, Gabriel forbade the** conspirators to kill Methodists and Quakers, groups that were actively seeking manumission for slaves in the area at this time. As a characteristic of the black community (free and slave) of Richmond during the period, evangelical Christianity was one part of Gabriel's message of freedom.

Twenty years later in Charleston, South Carolina, lay-preacher Denmark Vesey led a similar conspiracy to incite rebellion. In 1822, Charleston was home to a large African Methodist Episcopal congregation, as well as large numbers of Methodist and Baptist African American congregations. Many of the congregants were literate, including Vesey himself. Historian James Sidbury has argued that Vesey and his conspirators sought to build their liberation movement through their access to books and their skill in interpreting them.³ The most important of these texts by far was the Bible; Vesey and church leaders argued that the Bible did not sanction slavery or command obedience from slaves. Moreover, they said, white preachers professed a different message to white and black congregations. Vesey's plan called for teams of rebels to attack targets such as the arsenal **and guardhouse. Afterward, the rebels would flee to the newly-freed nation** of Haiti. The plot was foiled when word of the conspirator's plans were leaked; Vesey and

Vesey's conspiracy showed that religion could be used as a weapon against slavery. A decade later, Nat Turner used the message of the Second Great Awakening to help incite one of the largest slave rebellions in United States history. Turner was a literate, deeply religious man born into slavery in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner, who claimed to have experienced religious visions inspired by the Holy Spirit, used Biblical passages and his account of the visions to recruit more than seventy followers, both slave and free blacks, and incite rebellion. In late August of 1831, Turner and his followers launched the rebellion. Over the next two days, the insurrectionists killed some sixty white men, women, and children. The rebellion was quelled by a local militia, who killed or captured many of the **insurrectionists. Fifty-five slaves were tried for insurrection, murder, and treason.** They were subsequently executed. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the panicky white population killed more than one hundred black men, free and slave. Rumors spread across the South that the rebellion was not limited to Virginia; more African Americans were killed or arrested in Alabama, Virginia, and in other slaveholding states. Turner himself evaded capture for months. Eventually, however, he was captured, tried, and executed. After Turner's execution, lawyer Thomas Grey published **The Confessions of Nat Turner**, an account of his conversations with Turner before he was tried. The account spoke at length of Turner's religiously informed views of slavery and of his interpretations of the Bible. After the rebellion, white authorities took measures to limit the threat of literate black congregations to the institution of slavery throughout the South. For example, Virginia passed legislation making it illegal to teach slaves, free blacks, or mulattoes to read or write. Moreover, black congregations could not hold religious meetings without a licensed white minister present, presumably to assure that the right messages on slavery and freedom were the only ones presented from the pulpit.

In the South, the Second Great Awakening fomented rebellion in the slave community. On the frontier, an offshoot of the Second Great Awakening **sought to "restore" the Christian Church into one unified body patterned after** the original, primitive, or fundamental, form of Christianity described in

movement. The Latter Day Saint Movement (of which the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, popularly called the Mormons, is the most important branch) also was born in the Burned-Over District during the era of the Second Great Awakening.

The Mormons

The driving force behind the Latter Day Saint movement was its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. In 1823, Smith recounted that an angel named Moroni had visited him. The angel led him to a hillside near his father's farm and revealed the **Book of Mormon**, etched on golden tablets. Smith described Moroni as a son of the prophet Mormon and the last of the Nephites, descendants of Hebrews who had travelled to the Americas sometime around 500 BCE. **The book reports that there, Jesus visited the Nephites after his crucifixion** and resurrection. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830, and Smith began the formation of his church. Like many religious movements of the day, Mormons believed in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus. Unlike the prevailing message of the Second Great Awakening in the Burned-Over district, the Mormon church was extremely patriarchal; women could achieve salvation only through obedience and submission to their husbands. Leadership and authority within the church was the exclusive domain of white men. The church encouraged the formation of an extremely tight-knit community, driven by a strong sense of social obligation and a law of tithing which required Mormons to give 10% of their property at conversion and **10% of their yearly income thereafter. Over the next fifteen years, Smith** and his followers migrated westward, from New York to Ohio, and then on to Missouri under the direction of Brigham Young, seeking a place to establish a pure kingdom of Christ in America. The Church of Later-Day Saints proved to be a lasting and successful alternative vision to the Second Great Awakening of antebellum America.

The Unitarian Movement

Evangelical Christianity was certainly the most powerful religious movement in the antebellum United States, but it was not the only one. Throughout New England, many Christians began to espouse Unitarianism, a sect based on the importance of human reason. The Unitarians shared the optimism of the Second Great Awakening, the inherent goodness of humankind. Everyone was eligible for salvation, and a loving God embraced all. Dr. William Ellery Channing, one of the leading preachers and theologians of the Church, preached on the great

should be subject to rational thought and reason; Channing preached that my rational nature is from God. Unitarians attested to the oneness of God. As strict monotheists, Unitarians viewed Jesus as a saintly man, but not divine. The Unitarian church was most popular in New England and was centered in Boston. For the most part, it appealed to the elite of society. The Unitarian movement spread through many of the Congregationalist churches of the area. Channing's 1819 "Unitarian Christianity" sermon, which outlined many of the core beliefs of the new American sect, such as a belief in human goodness and rejection of the Trinity, inspired many churches to adopt Unitarianism.

Key Concepts

Key Concepts

The Second Great Awakening and the movement in religious revival in the United States had a profound impact on the United States. The new Protestant denominations, most prominently the Baptists and Methodists, grew in strength and numbers. The Second Great Awakening encouraged this impulse to reform by emphasizing individual responsibility and the desire to seek perfection. The Second Great Awakening manifested itself somewhat differently regionally. In the South, the movement became more conservative over time, and generally supported the system of slavery. Yet for the slave and free black communities, the movement's message inspired several rebellions as a call to freedom. In the north, the movement reached its zenith in the "Burned-Over District" of Charles Finney. In the early nineteenth century, the United States was becoming a more diverse nation; the new varieties of Protestantism were one reflection of this change.

Test Yourself

- The influence of reason and rational thought is most clearly expressed in what religious tradition?
 - Unitarians
 - Mormons
 - Methodists
 - Puritans

2. The _____ refers to an area of New York that was so affected by the Second Great Awakening that there was no more **fuel to burn” for the fire of religion.**
- Burned-Over District
 - anxious bench
 - Moroni
 - Millerites

[Click here to see answers](#)

13.3 CULTURAL MOVEMENTS: TRANSCENDENTALISM, UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES, AND THE CULT OF DOMESTICITY

Like the Second Great Awakening, other American movements professed a deep-held belief in the goodness of mankind. Transcendentalists and members of Utopian communities emphasized the perfectibility of humanity and took steps to live their lives and create communities so as to achieve some measure of human perfection. These movements transformed American culture in distinct ways. The transcendentalists had a lasting effect as part of a greater, global movement in Romanticism, which emphasized elevation of the spirit over reason. Transcendentalists also had a powerful effect on **the development of a distinctly American field of literature.**

More than a hundred Utopian communities were established throughout the United States during the nineteenth century; each of these communities sought to perfect the human experience, though they took differing views on how this could be achieved.

13.3.1 Transcendentalism

The transcendentalists were an intellectual community mostly centered in New England. They emphasized the dignity of the individual and exalted American ideals of freedom, optimism, and self-reliance. They sought to transcend the limits of reason and intellect and allow the soul to attain a relationship, a mystical oneness, with the universe. Many important American transcendentalists were writers who set about establishing an **“American literary independence,” producing a flowering of literature. Much of their literature reflected transcendental beliefs, praising Nature, a simple life, and self-reliance.** In *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau wrote of his experiences supporting himself living on Walden Pond, Massachusetts; he begins his narrative by declaring, 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 I had not lived. In his address "The American Scholar," fellow Massachusetts resident Ralph Waldo Emerson similarly wrote that "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will **speak our own minds. . . A nation of men will for the first time exist, because** each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."⁷ Many transcendentalists, including Emerson and Thoreau, were also reformers who worked in the abolitionist and women's rights causes.

13.3.2 Utopian Communities

Other groups held similar beliefs to the transcendentalists and focused their efforts on establishing ideal communities that would work to perfect the human experience in a social Utopia. Over the course of the century, some 100 Utopian communities were founded. Many focused on religion as the center of its community and activities; others were secular in nature. Utopian movements withdrew from the larger society and focused their efforts on the creation of a perfected new social order, not a reformed older one. Most of the communities stressed hard work and commitment to community ideals as a means of achieving this perfected new society. Many collapsed after years or even months; however, taken together, Utopianism **was a significant movement that introduced new ideas to American society.** In some cases, the transcendental and Utopian movements overlapped.

In 1840, leading transcendentalist George Ripley of Boston announced his intention of creating a place based on communal living and transcendental values. He and his followers established Brook Farm, where intellectuals pursued both hard physical and mental work as a way of life. Each member of the community was encouraged to work at the farming tasks that they liked best; every member was paid the same wage, including women. The community supported itself not only through farming, but also selling handmade goods and charging admission to the farm to curious visitors; they also earned money through the tuition raised by the excellent school run on the farm by Ripley. Brook Farm was to serve as an example in the perfection of living for the rest of the world. By 1844, community members had formally adopted a socialist societal model. They wrote and published a journal to promote and promulgate their views. However, the general public paid little attention to both the journal and the farm itself. Like many other Utopian communities, the experiment at Brook Farm came to an end in part **because it had little to no real effect on the outside world. The final factor in its ending was when part of the farm caught fire; the community was unable** to rebuild because the buildings were uninsured. By 1847, the experiment in communal living was over, and the farm closed down.

One of the longest-lasting Utopian traditions was the Shaker community. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing established multiple communities devoted to living a simple life and developing one's talents through hard work. They were popularly called Shakers because of their practice of worship through music and dance, sometimes in twitching, shaking movements. Shakers worked to perfect themselves and their communities in anticipation of Christ's return.

Shakers, who lived a celibate life, added to their community through adoption and conversion, by taking in orphans, the homeless, and poor. The sexes lived and worked separately but held property in common. They practiced equality of the sexes, and at each level of the church hierarchy, both men and women held leadership positions. Since men and women were equal in the eyes of God, they argued, men and women should be treated equally on Earth. In fact, the founder of the American Shaker church was a woman: Mother Ann Lee. Shakers believed that God had both male and female aspects, and that Mother Lee was the female counterpart to Christ. For these reasons, more women joined the Shakers than men. At their height, the movement had about 6,000 members; however, the movement's rule of celibacy brought about its decline as few people joined the Shakers after mid-century.

short on detailed specifics on how the community was to function on a day-to-day basis. The community limped along for several more months, but by 1827, it was subdivided and socialism gave way to individualism.

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Though many of the Utopian communities such as the Shakers called for relative equality of the sexes and women were viewed as spiritual equals in the Second Great Awakening, the American elite and middle class held a very different idea of the nature of women and their role in society. The **Cult of Domesticity** declared that the sphere of a true woman was her household. Publications such as **Godey's Lady Book** and **A Treatise on Domestic Economy** instructed women on how to create a refuge for their husbands and children, sheltering them from the cruel world outside. Moreover, women were to be the moral compass for their families. The Cult of Domesticity provided a powerful ideology of gender roles for many Americans. While not all regions and classes were adherents to this ideology, **it was a movement that profoundly influenced American culture.**

The ideology of the Cult of Domesticity took shape in the early 1800s. It viewed women and men as complete and total opposites, with almost no characteristics in common. Sex was the ultimate divisor, and gender roles and American society and culture were shaped with this division at its heart. Men and women inhabited two completely different spheres: the public world of work and politics, belonging exclusively to men, and the private world of home and family, the domain of women. Although the spheres were completely separate, they were complimentary. The Cult of Domesticity built upon this notion of separate spheres and asserted that true women were centered exclusively in the domestic world of home and family; childrearing and caretaking was not work for women, but a natural expression of their **feminine nature. True womanhood was found in selfless service to others.** True women were to be pure and pious as well as skilled practitioners of the domestic arts, such as needlecraft. The Cult of Domesticity was upheld as the ideal among the mainstream American culture; however, many women were effectively excluded from true womanhood by virtue of their social status, race, or religion. True women, the underlying message proclaimed, were white, Protestant, and did not work outside of the home; it was a middle-class social ideology resting on the assumption that a woman was married to a man who was able and willing to support her. Living the ideals of the Cult of Domesticity and true womanhood allowed the middle class to distinguish themselves from the working class as increasing industrialization, **urbanization, and immigration in the 1820-1850 period resulted in the first** emergence of female wage laborers.

The Cult of Domesticity served a religious as well as social and cultural role. **Through their devotion and sacrifice as wife, and more importantly,** as mother, women were serving as a Christian ideal for their family. She served as a representative of Christ in daily life and made her sphere of domesticity a kind of sacred territory, creating a home which was a haven from the heartless world for her husband and children. Historians Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil argue that true womanhood was a **fervently Protestant notion, which gave to female devotion and selfless sacrifice a redemptive power.**⁸ It is no coincidence that this ideology came to prominence in the same era as the Second Great Awakening.

Both the influence of the Cult of Domesticity and the role that women played in the Second Great Awakening ultimately allowed and even encouraged women to participate in the moral reform efforts that came to characterize the antebellum period in the United States. Beginning in the 1820s, women participate in female benevolent associations that sponsored international Christian missionary efforts. Other organizations worked closer to home to uplift the poor, spiritually and morally. Middle class women were involved in these organizations because adherents of the Cult of Domesticity viewed the absence of separate spheres and family values as the cause of poverty.

on the creation of a perfected new social order, not a reformed older one. Most of the communities withdrew from society, stressing the value of hard work and commitment to community ideals as a means of achieving this perfected new society. The Brook Farm community was an intellectual experiment that overlapped with the transcendental movement. The Shakers sought perfection of humanity in religion, stressing the equality of the sexes and celibacy. Finally, the utopian socialist community of New Harmony tried to create a more perfect society through communal work and property.

Finally, the Cult of Domesticity sought to perfect family life through the maintenance of a home run by a moral, domestically-skilled wife and mother. The home (and, by extension, the woman of the house) came to represent a place of morality, in sharp contrast to the corrupt public world. The Cult of Domesticity provided a powerful ideology of gender roles for many Americans. While not all regions and classes

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13.4 AMERICAN ANTEBELLUM REFORM

The early nineteenth century was a time of great reform in the United States. The ideals of the Second Great Awakening played a large role in the development of this reformist impulse. Preachers and believers all over the country saw humankind and society as good and perfectible, able to improve and strive to become more like God. At the same time, the Second Great Awakening stressed the notion of personal responsibility and the responsibility of a person to the sins of neighbors. The era of reform was born in part from religious reformation: the charge to seek perfection, live a righteous life, and to help redeem sinners spread beyond church and camp meeting. The antebellum reform movements were based in a network of **voluntary, church-affiliated reform organizations. The reform impulse was not solely confined to the United States; Europeans were also in the midst of** their own reform efforts. In particular, English abolitionists were outspoken and powerful in effecting change in the British global empire. Many types of reform movements existed during this period in the United States, and groups and causes only grew more splintered over time. Many different kinds of Americans worked in the reform movement. In particular, women played a large role in various aspects of reform. While not all Americans were active in the various reform movements, taken together, the reform impulse was a powerful force that characterizes the antebellum era.

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One of the most widespread of the reform movements in the 1820s-1840s was the temperance movement, which called for reducing the use of (or abstaining from) alcoholic beverages. Its roots lay in the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, where religious reformers called for individuals to lead clean lives and to redeem their sinning neighbors. The reformist impulse also stemmed from new social conditions. The increasing urbanization of the United States and the large numbers of immigrants, especially Germans, had transformed the nation in ways that were unfamiliar and that some found threatening. Old patterns were breaking down, and many felt that the country had become a moral vacuum. Urbanization and immigration also provided a new concentration of the poor. The emerging American middle class participated in reform not only for religious reasons, but also **to confirm their new social status. By helping others, they asserted their** worth while at the same time alleviating social ills.

Alcohol in many forms had been an important part of the diet of Americans **from the founding of the colonies onward. The Mayflower carried barrels** upon barrels of beer for its passengers. Whiskey was a frontier staple for generations because it preserved the harvest; in 1791, a Hamiltonian

attempt to tax whiskey to alleviate the national debt resulted in the Whiskey Rebellion.⁹ By the 1830s, Americans were drinking more than ever; in the

and debtors, could be reformed and morally redeemed. The result was the creation of penitentiaries, which sought to transform criminals into law abiding citizens through hard work, religious instruction, and isolation from the corruption of social vices. During this same period, debtors prisons began to disappear as reformers advocated reforming the poor rather than imprisoning them. Workhouses were established to keep the poor from drunkenness, idleness, and gambling. Finally, asylums were established for treatment and housing the mentally ill.

Dorothea Lynde Dix was instrumental in the reform effort that established state mental asylums. In the spring of 1841, Dix visited a Cambridge jail in order to teach Sunday school for a group of women inmates. There she found the inmates, some of them mentally ill (whom Dix refers to **as lunatics**), **housed in filthy conditions in unheated cells. Horrified, she** worked to publicize the conditions of the jail and gain public support for its improvement. She conducted an eighteen month study of the jails and almshouses of Massachusetts and, in 1843, made a presentation to the Massachusetts legislature, reporting that the mentally ill were housed in cages, closets, cellars and pens Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience.⁹ A movement for change was already underway

the more urbanized northeast; in the rural, more agricultural regions of the south and west, school reform was not as effectively implemented.

Women played a large role in education reform. Young female teachers staffed many of the schools. It is also during this time that higher education began to open to women. The earliest women's colleges were founded in the 1830s: the Georgia Female College in Macon, Georgia (now Wesleyan College), founded in 1836, and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts (Now Mount Holyoke College), founded in 1837. **Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio became the first co-educational institution** when it admitted four women in 1837.

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Two of the most significant reform movements to come out of the reform period of 1820-1840 were the anti-slavery movement and the women's rights movement. Each of these movements worked for freedom and emancipation and to grant a greater body of rights to two of the groups on the periphery of American society. The movements shared a common support base: many abolitionists supported or were active in the women's rights movement, or vice versa. In numerous ways, the organized women's rights movement grew out of abolitionist organizations and the movement of the early 1800s. Although neither group saw their cause's ultimate goals achieved during the era of reform, each movement saw great advances. Abolitionism was perhaps the most radical of the reform movements of the era.

The struggle to end slavery has a long history both globally and in the United States; indeed, the struggle to end slavery emerged at roughly the **same time as slavery itself. However, abolitionism developed significantly** over the 1800s. In the early decades of the century, several groups emerged as colonizationists. These groups sought to remove blacks from the United States either through emigration or through the creation of colonies in Africa. The end of slavery would come about gradually under this ideal. For the most part, colonizationists accepted the idea of black inferiority. For some members of the movement, the idea meant the end of slavery; for others, it was an answer for racial tensions in the United States. Kentucky Congressional representative Henry Clay argued for colonization because of the unconquerable prejudice against blacks in the United States. Other important politicians, including James Madison and Abraham Lincoln, favored repatriation rather than emancipation.

For the most part, the African American community did not see colonization or repatriation as a viable alternative to emancipation and abolition. **David Walker, an African American abolitionist, called for a unified global black**

The abolitionist sentiment was also present in the South. An important example of the abolitionist voice in the South came from sisters from Charleston, South Carolina who had migrated north and become Quakers because of their abolitionism. The Grimkø sisters, Sarah and Angelina, spoke out against the system of slavery in many forums. In 1837, Angelina wrote to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*. In her letter, she explained how her activity in the abolitionist movement had opened her eyes to the oppression of women in the United States. The sisters spoke before state legislatures **and were among the first women to speak in public forums before mixed** sex groups. The daughters of a prominent slave owner, they spoke of their personal knowledge and experience of the system. Angelina later married Theodore Dwight Weld, a prominent abolitionist preacher. She assisted in the research for his 1839 indictment of slavery, *American Slavery as it is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. The Grimkø sisters were one example of the overlap in the reformist impulse between abolitionism and women's rights.

The Women's Rights Movement

To the eyes of many reformers, the movements in abolition and women's rights had much in common; many who worked to end slavery also called for the emancipation of women. Indeed, the women's rights movement had largely grown out of the anti-slavery movement. Women joined and actively participated in abolitionist organizations such as the Anti-Slavery Society; they sponsored events such as the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. A key moment came in 1840, when the Anti-Slavery Society split after a woman, Abigail Kelley, was nominated to serve on one of the Society's committees. The majority of the members of the Society favored including women in the governing structure of the organization; the more conservative members broke away from the Anti-Slavery Society to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which excluded women. Kelly later wrote of her experiences in the abolitionist movement and how they shaped her views on women's rights: in striving to strike [the slaves'] irons off, we found most surely ~~that~~ **we were manacled ourselves.**¹³

Two of the leading figures of the women's rights movement met at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. There, the convention refused to seat the American female delegates. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, two of the excluded delegates, united to form an organization that would speak for oppressed women.

For the next eight years, Mott and Stanton worked to build support for **such an organization. In July 1848 they were finally able to call together a group together for the first national convention devoted to the issue of**

that women's rights challenged the most basic idea of true womanhood the **selfless nature of women**—because “**women's rights advocacy led women** to insist that they had the same claim on individual rights to life, liberty, property, and happiness as men. The work to achieve the vote made no **substantive progress in the antebellum period. The most significant success** was that by 1860, more than a dozen states had granted women greater control over the wages they earned, and some even allowed women to sue husbands and fathers who tried to deprive them of their wages.

2. The Seneca Falls Convention worked to establish_____
- a. women s rights.
 - b. a utopian community.
 - c. the end of slavery.
 - d. a national temperance society.
3. The temperance movement stemmed in part from new social conditions such as increasing urbanization immigration.
- a. True
 - b. False

[Click here to see answers](#)

13.5 Conclusion

The period between 1820 and 1860 reflected a national mood of experimentation and rebellion. Americans experimented in new ways of thinking and believing, and rebelled against injustices to women and the enslaved. The mid-nineteenth century was also a time of change in religion. Older religious denominations were supplanted in many areas by new religious sects such as the Methodists and Baptists. Others were deeply **influenced by the Enlightenment and rational thinking. Convinced of the perfection of nature defined and popularized by scientists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,** these new theologians believed that this very perfection argued for the existence of a rational creator. They based their religious beliefs and practices on this rationalism, downplaying the miracles of scripture and concentrating instead on the morals it imparted and the historical events it recounted, arguing, *my rational nature is from God.* However, these rational religions had limited appeal for the vast majority of Americans, who, in the mid-nineteenth century, were attracted to the preaching of the Second Great Awakening, a religious revival movement. Preachers like Peter Cartwright and Charles Grandison Finney created such excitement with their sermons that their audiences became excessive and downright wild.

The mid-nineteenth century also witnessed the appearance of a number of millennial sects advocating that the Second Coming of Jesus was at hand. The Mormons called themselves the latter day saints and spoke **continually of an approaching new dispensation; the official name of the Shakers was the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing.** The followers of William Miller, a Baptist convert and editor ~~of the~~ **Advent Herald,** established 1844 as the year of the Second Coming, sold their **worldly goods, and gathered either in churches or in fields to watch the** descent of Jesus. When he failed to appear, the movement disintegrated.

Just as the millennial sects looked forward to a new and better life introduced by the Second Coming of Jesus, so also did a group of men and women who participated in one of the many utopian experiments of the mid-century. The Shakers created a religious community that bound their residents to each other and to God. Brook Farm was one of the best-known **communities and included among its participants literary figures like** Ralph Waldo Emerson. Closely linked to the emotional outpouring behind revivalism and the creation of new, often millennial, sects was the appearance of a movement known as Romanticism. Manifested in transcendentalism and in the literature of mid-eighteenth century, American Romanticism embodied a revolt against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, of Deism

and Unitarianism, and emphasized the victory of heart over head. Utopian movements focused their efforts on the creation of a perfected new social order, not a reformed older one. Most of the communities withdrew from society, stressed the value of hard work and commitment to community ideals as a means of achieving this perfected new society. The Brook Farm community was an intellectual experiment that overlapped with the transcendental movement. The Shakers sought perfection of humanity in religion, stressing the equality of the sexes and celibacy. Finally, the utopian socialist community of New Harmony tried to create a more perfect society through communal work and property.

The Cult of Domesticity provided a powerful ideology of gender roles for many Americans. While not all regions and classes were adherents to this **ideology, it was a movement that profoundly influenced American culture.** In the ideology of separate spheres, the home (and, by extension, the woman of the house) came to represent a place of morality, in sharp contrast to the corrupt public world.

Two of the most significant reform movements to come out of the reform period of 1820-1840 were the anti-slavery movement and the women's rights movement. Each of these movements worked for freedom and emancipation and to grant a greater body of rights to two of the groups on the periphery of American society. The movements shared a common support base, and many abolitionists advocated, or were active in, the women's rights movement, or vice versa. In many ways, the organized women's rights movement grew out of abolitionist organizations and the movement of the early 1800s. Although neither group saw their cause's ultimate goals achieved during the era of reform, each movement saw great advances.

13.6 CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

Which reformist impulse changed the United States more deeply: religious or political reform?

13.7 KEY TERMS

Abolitionism

Anti-Slavery Society

Brooke farm

ANSWER KEY FOR CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ANTEBELLUM REVIVAL AND REFORM

Check your answers to the questions in the Before You Move On Sections for this chapter. You can click on the questions to take you back to the chapter section.

Correct answers are **BOLDED**

Section 13.2.2 - p. 593

7KH LQÀXHQFH RI UHDVVRQ DQG UDWLRQDO WKRXJKW LV PRVW FOHDU UHOLJLRXV WUDGLWLRQ"

- A. UNITARIANS
- b. Mormons
- c. Methodists
- d. Puritans

2. The _____ refers to an area of New York that was so affected by the Second

*UHDW \$ZDNHQLQJ WKDW WKHUH ³ZDV QR PRUH IXHO WR EXUQ´ IRU WKH ¿

- A. BURNED-OVER DISTRICT
- b. "anxious bench"
- c. Moroni
- d. Millerites

Section 13.3.4 - p. 599

1. Transcendentalists viewed _____ as the key to the human experience.

- a. transcending nature to attain reason
- b. equality of nations
- C. SELF-RELIANCE
- d. dystopian communities

2. Shakers and Millerites were _____ movements, because they thought that the second coming of Jesus was approaching.

- A. MILLENNIAL
- b. diurnal
- c. reform
- d. utopian

3. The notion of separate spheres and the Cult of Domesticity allowed the American Middle class to distinguish themselves as separate from and superior to the working class.

- A. TRUE
- b. False

Section 13.4.4 - p. 608

1. The colonizationist scheme of the early 1800s proved to be popular among black abolitionists.

- a. True
- B. FALSE

2. The Seneca Falls Convention worked to establish _____

- \$: 2 0 (1 ¶ 6 5 , * + 7 6
- b. a utopian community.
- c. the end of slavery.
- d. a national temperance society.

