Chapter 11
Religion and Reform, 1820-1860
Individualism: The Ethic of the Middle Class

• Individualism-
• American Renaissance-

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalism

• Emerson was the leading voice of “transcendentalism”
• Embraced human passion, spirituality, deep thought, and mysteries of existence
• God-
• Nature
• Against materialism and capitalism
• Lyceum movement-
• “God has made man a moral free agent”
Emerson’s Literary Influence

• Inspired American writers to find inspiration in experiences of ordinary Americans.

Thoreau, Fuller, and Whitman

• Henry David Thoreau- author
  • “Walden, or Life in the Woods” (1854)- an account of search for meaning beyond artificiality of civilized society
  • Advocated social nonconformity and civil disobedience

• Margaret Fuller- editor, literary critic, reporter
  • Started transcendental groups (1839)-
  • Ideology of gender roles-

• Walt Whitman- poet
  • wrote about “invisible boundaries” between living and dead
  • Emphasized breaking from tradition
Darker Visions

• Emerson influenced great novelists, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville who were more pessimistic on the view of the world.

• Nathaniel Hawthorne
  • “The Scarlet Letter” (1850)

• Herman Melville
  • “Moby Dick” (1851)

Brook Farm

• Most important transcendentalist community or utopia in 1841, just outside of Boston.

• Hoped to be self sufficient by producing their own food
  • Problem

• A devastating fire in 1846 led to its disbandment

• The former community focused now on reform through education of workers and abolition.
Rural Communalism and Urban Popular Culture

• Thousands of Americans joined communal settlements after the Panic of 1837. They challenged capitalist and gender tradition. Simultaneously, rural Americans and European immigrants poured into urban areas challenging sexual norms, bringing new styles and behaviors, and bringing racist attitudes to the city.

Mother Ann Lee and the Shakers

• The Shakers began the first successful communal movement in 1784 after the death of Mother Ann Lee
• Established a church near Albany, NY
• Beliefs:
  • “God was a dual person, male and female”
• Twenty communities mostly in NY, New England, and OH
  • Self sustaining
  • Efficient farms and craft making
• Adoption used to grow
• Declined in 1850s from lack of young members
Arthur Brisbane and Fourierism

- In the 1840s the American Fourierist movement grew
- Utopian socialism
  - Phalanxes
- Women

John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community

- John Humphrey Noyes defined sexuality and gender roles in new radical ways.
- Settled in Oneida, NY by 1840s
- Rejected marriage; “Complex marriage”
- Rejected monogamy
- Financially self sustaining (inventor joined)
Joseph Smith and the Mormon Experience

- Because of their cohesiveness and size, the Mormons provoked more animosity than the radical utopians did.

Joseph Smith

- Founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- 1830 he published the “Book of Mormon”
- Prophet
- Beliefs:
  - Moved from NY to IL to escape persecution
  - 30,000
  - Resentment by others. Why?
  - Polygamy
  - Arrested
Brigham Young and Utah

• He led about 6500 Mormons to Great Salt Lake Valley
• 1848 after U.S. acquired Mexican territory, they petitioned congress to create a new state.
• Young was named governor of Utah
• Openly resisted federal laws
• “Mormon War”
  • Small army sent to Utah
  • Mormons killed 120 CA bound emigrants and murdered suspicious travelers
  • Murdered those wanting to leave commune
• The U.S. did not abolish polygamy. Why?
• Strict religious controls, traditional values, social conservatism, strong missionary work, and wealthy church.
Urban Popular Culture

- Rural migrants and foreign immigrants created a new urban culture.

Sex in the City

- Thousands of young men and women from rural areas flocked to the city searching for adventure and fortune.
- Difficult work life, especially women
  - Live in servants and needlewomen
  - Prostitution
    - 15-20
    - Children
    - Syphilis
- Commercial sex
  - “sporting men”
  - Married men kept mistresses in apartments
  - Hundreds of brothels (in NY)
- Illicit sex considered acceptable
- Men formed homoerotic friendships as early as 1800s
- “B’hoy” of Broadway
**Minstrelsy**

- The most popular theatrical entertainment shows
- Began in 1830s; hundreds of troupes by 1840s
- Blackface racist caricature and social criticism
- John Dartmouth Rice “Jim Crow”
- Portrayal of African Americans
- Criticism of white society
- Emphasized the importance of being white
- This racism encouraged Irish and German immigrants to identify with native born whites, which eased their entry into NY society.

**Immigrant Masses and Nativist Reaction**

- By 1855 German and Irish populations in NY reached 200,000 and 110,000 respectively.
- Irish migrants identified with...
- Nativist movement (1830)-
  - Immigration
  - Assaults
  - Menial jobs
  - Temperance
  - Anti-Catholic movements
Abolitionism

• Abolition drew on the religious enthusiasm of the Second Great Awakening. Slavery was viewed as a contradiction to republicanism and liberty.

Black Social Thought: Uplift, Race Equality, and Rebellion

• Beginning in the 1790s leading African Americans looked to elevate themselves through: education, temperance, and hard work.

• Schools, churches, self help associations

• Elicited violence in northern cities

• White mobs terrorized black communities
  • Cincinnati

David Walker’s Appeal

• A free black man from NC who moved to Boston

• Published “An Appeal...to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829)”

• Radical call for a slave revolt

• New generation of activists
Nat Turner’s Revolt

• VA slave and preacher, literate
• In 1831 led a violent rebellion with 60 men killing 55 whites
• White militia killed 40 blacks in two days putting heads on poles as a warning
• Turner was hanged and rebellion stopped
• VA assembly debated law to end slavery
• Effect:
Evangelical Abolitionism

• Northern evangelical Christians launched a moral crusade to abolish slavery immediately.

William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, and Angelina and Sarah Grimke

• William Lloyd Garrison, (MA) founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society and weekly “Liberator”.

• American Anti-Slavery Society (1833)
• Theodore Weld “The Bible Against Slavery” (1837)
• Girmke sisters “American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses” (1839)

The American Anti-Slavery Society

• Strategy
  • Pamphlet campaign
  • Aide fugitive slaves (Fugitive Slave Law 1793)
  • Political campaign
Opposition and Internal Conflict

• Abolitionists remained a minority.

Attacks on Abolitionism

• Wealthy men
• Clergy
• Textile manufacturers
• Workers
• Whites universally opposed “amalgamation”
• Violent mobs in the North
• Southerners banned abolitionists
• “gag rule”

Internal Divisions

• Gender issues
• Garrison demanded that the American Anti-Slavery Society support women’s rights too.
  • Liberty Party (1840)
The Women’s Rights Movement

• The prominence of women abolitionists reflected a shift in American culture. Women entered public life by also joining religious revivals and the temperance movement.

Origins of the Women’s Movement

• Typical male perspective of women
• “separate sphere”
• Spiritual activism in the Second Great Awakening
  • Effect:

Moral Reform

• Female Moral Reform Society, NY 1834
  • Curb prostitution
  • Against “double standard”
  • Guidance for women away from families (factory workers)
  • Refuge for runaways and prostitutes
  • Visited brothels
Improving Prisons, Creating Asylums, Expanding Education (1840s)

- Dorothea Dix (MA)
  - establish state asylums for mental illness
  - Improvement of prisons
- Horace Mann (MA)
  - Increased standards of education
  - Recruited women as teachers
- Catharine Beecher (OH)
  - Argued that:
    - By 1850, most teachers were women. Why?
Abolitionist Women

• Central to anti-slavery movement
• Women were aware of specific horrors of female slaves
  • Compounded by owner’s wives
• “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” (1852), Harriet Beecher Stowe
  • Greatest moral failings of slavery was the degradation of women
• White abolitionists became aware of subordinate status
• Inspired by Enlightenment
• By 1840, abolitionist women compared their gender roles to that of “domestic slavery”
The Program of Seneca Falls and Beyond

• During the 1840s women activists challenged legal rights of married women instead of ...

• Property rights; 1848 NY statute

• **Seneca Falls, NY; Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott**
  • Declaration of Independence to women
  • “All men and women are created equal”

• In 1850 delegates to the first national women’s convention in Worcester, MA
  • Revise church ideology
  • Custody in women’s favors
  • Suffrage

• **Susan B. Anthony**
  • Temperance and anti-slavery movements
  • 1860 helped secure NY law for right to control wages
  • Own property acquired by trade, business, or services
  • Sole guardianship for widows