

## *The Age of Reform*

**In the aftermath of the Second Great Awakening and the rise of the so-called common man the age had spawned impressive faith in democracy, liberty, equality, and augmented the belief that the United States was a special nation with a mission to fulfill.**

**The optimistic belief that the American experiment in democracy would elevate the common man to heights hitherto unattainable by ordinary people led many people to believe that human suffering could be alleviated through human ingenuity.**

**It was painfully obvious to many Americans, however, that not everyone was enjoying the fruits of liberty.**

**Many reformers began championing causes as diverse as abolition, feminism, temperance, prison and asylum reform, educational reform, and workers' rights.**

**Three major antecedents:**

**Religious Revivalism and the belief that every man, woman, and child was equal in the eyes God regardless of race or class.**

**The Romantic Movement**

**French Utopian Socialists**

**Charles Grandison Finney -- "The Burned-Over District,"  
mesmerizing -- once he described the descent of a sinner into hell  
& the entire congregation watched the imaginary wretch plummet  
into the fiery pit to the extent that the back row actually got to its**

feet so they could see where Finney pointed. On another occasion he mimed throwing a brick at the devil and the entire congregation ducked.

With so many people being “born again” and devoting their lives to Jesus Christ it underscored the notion that if human beings had the willpower and ability to bring about such dramatic personal changes they could also work together to change society.

Joseph Smith – had a vision of the angel Moroni –dug up tablets & translated them as the *Book of Mormon* in 1830.

Story of the “lost tribe of Israel” that had migrated to North America seven centuries before Christ’s birth. This lost tribe was the ancestors of the Indians. Between His crucifixion and ascension Christ visited America, but the inhabitants rejected His message. As a result they were cursed and the land was declared reserved for God’s righteous people and that one day a modern prophet would arise who would establish the pure kingdom of Christ.

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**

critics derisively pointed out that the book sounded a lot like the King James Bible with such phrases as “and it came to pass” sprinkled liberally throughout the text.

Living together in a community Mormons organized along lines similar to the utopian socialist communes and antagonized their neighbors

They moved to Ohio, then Missouri, and finally Illinois, where in 1844 in Nauvoo, Smith was shot to death by an angry mob.

**Later that year Smith's successor, Brigham Young, led the Mormons out of Illinois, to the great salt lake outside the boundary of the United States**

**William Miller -- Added up the "begats" in the Old Testament and reckoned it was possible to pinpoint the dates for the fulfillment of the prophecies foretold in the book of Revelations. In 1831 he began to predict the imminent return of Christ and the ushering in of the millennium—the one thousand year period of Christ's rule on Earth.**

**"I am fully convinced," he proclaimed, "that somewhere between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of time computation, Christ will come." By 1844 Miller had more than 50,000 followers, many of whom eagerly sold their farms and property and awaited the rapture.**

**On the night of March 21, 1844 thousands of "Millerites" positioned themselves on mountain tops and roof tops in specially-designed "ascension robes" expecting to hear the trumpets sound and to be elevated to the celestial kingdom. When, to everyone's disappointment, Christ did not appear Miller recalculated his figures and came up with a new date, October 22, 1844.**

**Several sects emerged out of the Millerites, primarily the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Jehovah's Witnesses and, more recently, the Branch Davidians, which preach "pre-millennialism"—the belief that we are in the last days of the Earth before the Apocalypse.**

### **French Utopian Socialism**

**Joseph Proudhon -- "property is theft"**

**Charles Fourier – "marriage is nothing but legalized prostitution."**

**French Utopian Socialist ideas and communal experiments had a significant impact in Europe, most notably at mid-century when Karl Marx, and in the United States**

**Brook Farm**

**New Harmony**

**Oneida**

**The Romantic Movement**

**Enlightenment philosophy led to the industrial revolution, the triumph of technology, and the attempt to conquer Nature. Romantics sought to restore spirituality, emotion, the mystery of life, and self-realization for the individual.**

**In America -- James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville**

**Transcendentalism**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson -- Oversoul**

**Understanding -- externally-imposed knowledge**

**Reason -- the innate, intuitive capacity each individual has for recognizing truth and beauty. This was the highest human faculty. It is in intuitive awareness where our wisdom lies. He argued that in order to live a meaningful life each individual must strive to transcend the narrow confines of externally-imposed knowledge and cultivate this intuitive wisdom.**

**We are all part of the godhead. We all have a spark of divinity within us. When we see this we achieve self-realization, we recognize our interconnectedness with nature, with the universe, with all living**

creatures. In this way we see that there is no difference between humans, there is no difference on the soul level between races or the genders. Therefore self-realization leads us to a deeper engagement with the world.

**Each individual must become self-reliant, must think for him or herself and not be concerned about what everyone else thinks or expects.**

**“Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.**

**Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. . . .**

**Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. . . .**

**What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.**

**A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it**

contradict every thing you said to-day. — “Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.” — Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.”

**Henry David Thoreau -- the individual *must* resist the pressures to conform, *must* resist the pressures to do what society expects, and instead follow his or her own dreams. Most people fail to see this and as a result are living “lives of quiet desperation.”**

**He chided people who are so busy chasing after material goods they fail to see what is essential. We need to simplify our lives and recognize that most of the possessions we own we do not need. We spend our whole lives striving to accumulate things without ever noticing what is meaningful. If we learned to see what really *is*, if we examined our hearts and followed in the direction of our own dreams, we would no longer be content with the false values of society.**

**“Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. . . .**

**I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the**

**universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”**

## **Abolitionism**

### **American Colonization Society**

**David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World***

**“America is more our country than it is the whites’—we have enriched it with our blood and tears,” he wrote. “The whites want slaves, and want us for their slaves, but some of them will curse the day they ever saw us.” If whites did not abolish slavery then slaves should rise up and cut their masters’ throats. “Kill, or be killed.”**

**....I appeal to Heaven for my motive in writing—who knows what my object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this Republican Land of Liberty!!!!!!**

**....we, (coloured people of these United States of America) are the most wretched, degraded and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began, and that the white Americans having reduced us to the wretched state of slavery, treat us in that condition more cruel (they being an enlightened and Christian people,) than any heathen nation did any people whom it had reduced to our condition....**

**I have been for years troubling the pages of historians, to find out what our fathers have done to the white Christians of America, to merit such condign punishment as they have**

inflicted on them, and do continue to inflict on us their children. But I must aver, that my researches have hitherto been to no effect. I have therefore, come to the immoveable conclusion, that they (Americans) have, and do continue to punish us for nothing else, but for enriching them and their country....

Are we MEN!! I ask you, O my brethren! are we MEN? Did our Creator make us to be slaves to dust and ashes like ourselves? Are they not dying worms as well as we? Have they not to make their appearance before the tribunal of Heaven, to answer for the deeds done in the body, as well as we? Have we any other Master but Jesus Christ alone? Is he not their Master as well as ours? What right then, have we to obey and call any other Master, but Himself? How we could be so submissive to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether they are as good as ourselves or not, I never could conceive. However, this is shut up with the Lord, and we cannot precisely tell--but I declare, we judge men by their works.

The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority....

**Southerners so outraged they put a price on Walker's head**

**Walker's *Appeal* marks the transition from moderate anti-slavery protests to the far more inflammatory, and sometimes fanatical, anti-slavery protests of William Lloyd Garrison, the Grimké sisters, Elijah Lovejoy, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, and numerous others. Southerners were convinced that Nat Turner had been inspired by Walker's *Appeal* and now, added to their fears of a slave revolt, was the specter of radical northerners inducing slaves to commit murder.**

## William Lloyd Garrison

*The Liberator*, January 1, 1831, Garrison condemned gradualism and colonization he called for immediate abolition as well as the “immediate enfranchisement of our slave population.”

I am aware, that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? *I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice.* On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—**AND I WILL BE HEARD....**

Southern states also offered rewards for Garrison’s capture, trial and conviction. In 1835 a pro-slavery mob snatched him. The mayor had to put him in jail for safekeeping.

Garrison wrote on the cell wall : “Wm. Lloyd Garrison was put into this cell Wednesday afternoon, October 21, 1835, to save him from the violence of a ‘respectable and influential’ mob, who sought to destroy him for preaching the abominable and dangerous doctrine that “all men are created equal....”

July 4, 1854, he took his dissent so far that he publicly burned a copy of the United States Constitution in Boston Common as “an agreement with death and a covenant with hell.”

Sarah and Angelina Grimké

**In 1836 Angelina wrote an appeal to southern women to join the abolition crusade, not just because slavery was evil in and of itself, but because so many slave owners were sexually abusing female slaves and fathering so many children that it was destroying the sanctity of marriage and family life in the South. Slavery, she argued, was not only destroying African Americans it was also another form of male domination over all women. This pamphlet stirred quite an uproar, not only because of its linking slavery with the oppression of women, but also because a woman wrote it. Women in the 1830s were not expected to be so outspoken, especially about such an explosive issue.**

**Calling slavery a violent institution, “a national sin” that will inevitably lead to bloodshed, Angelina urged southern women to rise up and join the abolitionist crusade before it is too late.**

**if Southern women sit down in listless indifference and criminal idleness, public opinion cannot be rectified and purified at the South. It is manifest to every reflecting mind, that slavery must be abolished; the era in which we live, and the light which is overspreading the whole world on this subject, clearly show that the time cannot be distant when it will be done. Now there are only two ways in which it can be effected, by moral power or physical force, and it is for *you* to choose which you prefer. Slavery always has, and always will produce insurrections, wherever it exists, because it is a violation of the natural order of things, and no human power can much longer perpetuate it. The opposers of abolitionists fully believe this; one of them remarked to me not long since, there is no doubt there will be a most terrible overturning at the South in a few years, such cruelty and wrong, must be visited with divine vengeance soon. Abolitionists believe, too, that this must inevitably be the case if you do not repent, and they are not willing to leave you to perish without entreating you, to save yourselves from destruction....**

**There is nothing to fear from immediate Emancipation, but *every thing* from the consequences of slavery....**

**Theodore Dwight Weld -- “Lane Rebels” became a significant core group of abolitionists at Lane theological seminary and later founded Oberlin College**

**Arthur and Lewis Tappan wealthy New York merchants who used their fortune to finance the publication and distribution of abolitionist literature.**

**Elijah P. Lovejoy ran an abolitionist press in Alton, Illinois**

**Sojourner Truth was a former slave who went about the country giving speeches denouncing slavery and supporting feminism.**

**Wendell Phillips -- eloquent orator**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson condemned the Fugitive Slave Law**

**According to Emerson, such a law is immoral and “an immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it, at every hazard. For Virtue is the very self of every man. It is, therefore, a principle of law, that an immoral contract is void, and that an immoral statute is void, for, as laws do not make right, but are simply declaratory of a right which already existed, it is not to be presumed that they can so stultify themselves, as to command injustice.” The crux of the Fugitive Slave Law is that it “is a statute which enacts the crime of kidnapping,--a crime on one footing with arson and murder.” Therefore it is clear that such a law is wrong and even goes against the most basic principle upon which the United States was founded: “A man’s right to liberty,” Emerson declared, “is as inalienable as his right to life.”**

## **Frederick Douglass**

**What, to the American slave, is your 4<sup>th</sup> of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.**

**Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival....**

## **Slavery's Defenders**

**Southerners published books and pamphlets underscoring the positive benefits of slavery. Emphasizing the Sambo personality that some slaves displayed as a survival tactic, slaveholders argued that African Americans were like children and would not be able to survive in America unless they were supervised by kindly, paternalistic masters.**

**Slaves needed slavery because they were unfit for the competitive market place.**

**The Bible was also used as an elaborate apology for slavery.**

### **Economic arguments:**

**Slavery was good because it enabled a large area of the United States to remain agrarian in the face of the assault of the industrial revolution.**

**Slavery would help preserve all that's good in the American character whereas the industrialization of the North has already shown the evils attending manufacturing.**

**Comparison with northern wage workers.**

### **Feminism**

**Margaret Fuller -- inwardly, on the soul level, all people are equal. There is no fundamental difference between races, there is no fundamental difference between man and woman.**

**“Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.”**

**Each man, according to Fuller, possesses the feminine principle just as each woman the masculine. It is through the union of the feminine and masculine that human beings can find fulfillment.**

**Because the sexes *are* equal, women should no longer submit to being shunted aside as somehow less than a man, they should have faith in their own innate abilities and intellect and strive for self-realization.**

**Transcendentalism became part of the philosophical underpinning of both Abolitionism and Feminism**

**Feminism -- World Anti-Slavery Convention 1840**

## **Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott**

### **1848 Seneca Falls**

**“We are assembled,” Stanton said during her opening remarks, to protest against a form of government existing without the consent of the governed—to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which we are taxed to support, to have such disgraceful laws as give man the power to chastise and imprison his wife, to take the wages which she earns, the property which she inherits, and, in case of separation, the children of her love; laws which make her the mere dependent on his bounty. It is to protest against such unjust laws as these that we are assembled today, and to have them, if possible, forever erased from our statute books, deeming them a shame and a disgrace to a Christian republic in the nineteenth century. We have met to uplift woman's fallen divinity upon an even pedestal with man's. . . .**

**The world has never yet seen a truly great and virtuous nation, because in the degradation of woman the very fountains of life are poisoned at their source. It is vain to look for silver and gold from mines of copper and lead. It is the wise mother that has the wise son. So long as your women are slaves you may throw your colleges and churches to the winds. You can't have scholars and saints so long as your mothers are ground to powder between the upper and nether millstone of tyranny and lust. ...**

**We do not expect our path will be strewn with the flowers of popular applause, but over the thorns of bigotry and prejudice will be our way, and on our banners will beat the dark storm clouds of opposition from those who have entrenched themselves behind the stormy bulwarks of custom and authority, and who have fortified their position by every means, holy and unholy....”**

## **The Declaration of Sentiments**

**Responding to rising concerns about women's rights some states passed Married Women's Property Acts that overturned the prevailing laws that a married woman's property did not belong to her, but to her husband.**

**New Jersey, in 1852, enacted a law specifying "That the real and personal property, and the rents, issues, and profits thereof, of any female now married, shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband, but shall be her sole and separate property, as if she were a single female...."**

## **Temperance**

**The campaign led by evangelists, women, and reformers became so successful that by the 1840s more than one million Americans joined various temperance organizations and tens of thousands of people signed abstinence pledges. Men promised to set a good example to their sons by abstaining from drink and cursing, vowed to treat their wives with more respect, and pledged that they would spend more time with their families. Alcohol consumption in the United States dropped by 50 percent.**

## **Labor Agitation**

**In the 1830s Boston workers campaigned for a ten-hour day.**

**Lowell Mill Girls struck in 1834 & 1836**

**In Paterson, New Jersey, children walked off the job at a mill protesting that the lunch break was shifted from noon to 1:00 o'clock. The work stoppage lasted ten days before they were forced back to work. The mill later, quietly restored the lunch hour to noon.**

## **Asylum, Prison, and Health Reform**

**Dorothea Dix -- reform prisoners, not punish them.**

**Health Reformers -- Resorts opened all over the country promising to cure patients from whatever ailed them. Hot springs, mud baths, body purges, hypnotism.**

**Sylvester Graham argued there were too many additives in commercially-baked bread so as to give it its white color. (White bread had become the rage because it was considered a status symbol by the upwardly-mobile middle class who disparaged the dark bread of the lower classes.) He espoused vegetarianism and invented a new cracker made of coarse, unsifted whole wheat flour without any additives that would have restorative effects on the digestive system: the Graham cracker.**

## **Education**

**In the early 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries children were treated much more cavalierly than they are today. Parents paid less attention to their children during the first few years because infant and childhood mortality rates were so high and it seemed sensible to them not to get too emotionally involved until they were sure the children would survive.**

**Mortality rate declined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1830s American children were receiving much more attention and care from their parents.**

**More and more children were nurtured, disciplined, and taught morality at home**

**Horace Mann and others called for universal free education – He cleverly argued that society as a whole benefits when all citizens are educated and thus should be supported by taxes.**

**Education provides opportunities for people, cuts crime, creates stability, protects democracy, and prevents class conflict, enables assimilation of new immigrant groups, and teaches the common man to respect private property and the values of industrialism, making him fit in as a productive worker, and productive workers can earn higher incomes, which, in turn would be spent on consumer products.**

**In Mann's system schools were free and open to all**

**Teachers were better trained and paid twice what they had been previously and the school year was increased from a few weeks to six months.**

**He also established institutes for training teachers and librarians and he also introduced new pedagogical methods into the classroom whereby children would be taught to think for themselves and learn to use their intellect.**

**The Common Schools would also teach children proper middle-class values and morality and thus those who were potential dissenters and troublemakers would be properly socialized.**

**Mann promoted the "whole word" approach to reading rather than the older method of teaching the letters and putting them together into words.**

**By the 1850s all states had established tax-supported schools and some made primary and secondary education compulsory.**

**Introduced Friedrich Fröbel's kindergarten model, and the pedagogical theories of Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (children learn through activities, not through being "talked at," and that**

**the effective teacher, while guiding them through an activity, allows the pupils to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions). “Object teaching,” e.g., a teacher should use a tangible object to gain the child’s attention, like an “owl pellet,” and then construct the lesson around it by having the children dissect the pellet and deduce what the owl had eaten. Furthermore, the teacher should help train the “whole child” not just the intellect; the goal is to balance the “hands, heart, and head.”**

**“Education,” Mann had claimed, “is the great equalizer,” and it is the natural right of every child. It was this view that, by the end of the century, opened up education in America for all people and influenced the way children today are taught.**

**It is ironic that Mann, who saw education as opening the door for social and economic advancement and who wanted to extend its benefits to even those who could not pay for it, was also an enthusiastic promoter of the interests of the business class.**

**Of course, in order to get the moneyed-elite to agree to a tax-supported educational system Mann employed every argument he could to convince them that their self-interest lay with the Common School system.**

**But his arguments that education would mold immigrants and the poor into trustworthy citizens, who would dutifully become the workers in factories, mills, and industrial plants, have earned him a great deal of criticism from some historians. They see him as trying to thwart radical change through educational reforms and that Mann’s Common School was really an instrument of social control whereby the wealthy could manipulate and indoctrinate the lower classes. Children were taught that they could advance socially if they cultivated the ideals of thrift, discipline, punctuality, and respect for authority, while, in reality, they were**

**being trained to become useful as a source of cheap, and cooperative, labor.**

**Still, the Common Schools did help regulate the growing gap between ordinary citizens and the wealthy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—the gap continued to grow, but at a slower pace.**

**An especially significant result of the education reforms of the 1830s and 1840s was the feminization of the teaching profession.**

**Over the next several years more and more women entered college and teacher training schools in order to become teachers. Later in the century, as this trend accelerated when universal education became compulsory in all states, this had an enormous, unexpected, effect on the women's movement.**