

Chapter 13: An American Renaissance: Religion, Romanticism, And Reform

Expanded from Tindall Outline available at <http://www.wnorton.com/college/history/america6/outline/ch13.htm>

- I. Antebellum religion
 - A. Effects of Enlightenment – major reforms, advances in human rights
 1. Deism
 - a. Roots in rationalism and Calvinism
 - i. Predestination, stern god → humankind's inherent goodness, social progress & individual perfectibility
 - b. Nature of the beliefs
 - i. God planned universe, set it into motion, left it alone (Newton's idea)
 - ii. Skeptical of miracles, defended free speech; freedom from religious force
 2. Unitarianism and Universalism
 - a. Nature of the beliefs
 - i. Generosity of god, goodness of humanity, all eligible for salvation
 - b. William Ellery Channing – inspiring Unitarian leader, Boston's Federal St. Church
 - c. Universalism
 - i. Anti-calvinist, working-class people; salvation of all men & women
 - ii. God was too good to damn people; people too good to be damned
 - B. The Second Great Awakening
 1. Origins of revivalism – Americans very religious
 2. The frontier phase
 - a. Camp meetings
 - i. Late summer, fall; setup tents, met & preached to
 - b. Reception among sects
 - i. Presbyterians
 - I. Agreed with Congregationalists of Conn. in doctrine
 - II. Scotch-Irish, Penn. → Georgia
 - ii. Baptists
 - I. Simplicity of doctrine, common people of frontier
 - II. Adult baptism; equality of all before god
 - iii. Methodists
 - I. Salvation by free will, centralized church structure
 - II. "Circuit rider" – rides & send message of salvation (1st – Francis Asbury, most effective: Peter Cartwright)
 - c. Black revivals
 - i. Setup camp next to other camp meetings; free-blacks & slaves
 3. "Burned-over District" – regions swept by revival fever
 - a. Charles Grandison Finney
 - i. Preached for 6 mos. 100,000 conversions; conversion experiences
 - ii. Advertising & showmanship to "sell" religion

- b. Oberlin College – Finny as Chair of Theology, then president
 - i. 1st to admit blacks & women; anti-slavery
- 4. Mormon church
 - a. Roles of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Brigham Young
 - i. Smith Jr. – Visions of Savior and God said all religions were false, except his, angel led him to Book of Mormon (in reformed Egyptian) claimed it was a lost section of the bible
 - I. Formed his own church
 - ii. Young – successor to Smith, moved from Nauvoo → Utah
 - b. Movement West
 - i. Nauvoo → Utah, near Oregon Trail for trade with passer-by-ers

II. Romanticism in America

- A. Nature of the romantic revolt – spirit over logic of Enlightenment
- B. Transcendentalism as a romantic expression
 - 1. Nature of transcendentalism - Areas beyond reason
 - 2. Roots of transcendentalism
 - a. Teachings of Buddha, Mohammedan Sufis, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita
 - 3. The role of Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - a. lectures, writings to express views
 - b. “Self-Reliance” (1841): message of individualism & cultivation of one’s personality
 - 4. The role of Henry David Thoreau
 - a. “Civil Disobedience” – refused to pay state tax b/c opposed Mexican war

III. The flowering of American literature

- A. Nathaniel Hawthorne – New England Writer, haunted by Puritan ancestors (Salem Witch trial judge); impossible to remove all sin from human soul
- B. Emily Dickinson – original & powerful Poet; themes: life, death, fear, loneliness, nature, god
- C. Washington Irving – proof American could make career of literature, adept imitator
- D. James Fenimore Cooper – conflict: Man vs. backwoods nature; romances of frontier life; model for cowboy movie, novels
- E. Edgar Allan Poe – Gothic horror short stories; inventor of detective story; fear most powerful emotion
- F. William Gilmore Simms – gentleman of letters
- G. Herman Melville – realistic fiction (based on his adventures at sea), Moby-Dick
- H. Walt Whitman – explicit sexual references; homoerotic elements; rejects women’s domestic sphere
- I. The popular press
 - 1. Impact of advances in printing technology
 - a. Napier press → improvements by Richard Hoe → Hoe rotary press (1847)
 - b. Greater, cheaper circulation
 - c. Harder to enter publishing b/c need large investment
 - 2. Daily papers – circulation, content ↑: social gossip, sports, crime, accidents

IV. Education

- A. Demography
 - 1. Level of literacy – 78% tot. pop.; 91% white pop.
 - 2. Rural settlement patterns – lower in rural areas; lower density in south
- B. Early public schools
 - 1. Rising demand in 1830s - Workers wanted free schools for their children, need education for republic
 - 2. Work of Horace Mann – state board systems, “normal school” for teacher training, 6 mo. min. school year
 - 3. North Carolina leadership – 1860 2/3 white pop. In school ~4 mos.
 - 4. Hindrances – funds, books, buildings, equipment, teacher pay low,
- C. Popular education
 - 1. Institutes – inform general public; ex. workingmen’s institutes, debating societies...
 - 2. lyceum movement – sharing of knowledge thru public lecture
 - 3. Public libraries – Ben. Franklin’s Philadelphia Lib. Co. (1731) → growth of libraries
 - a. Boston Library (1851), 1st library for common people
- D. Higher education
 - 1. Post-Revolutionary surge in colleges – many w/ religious denominations
 - 2. State-religion conflicts – what to teach; funding vs. curriculum; church schools taught theology over sciences
 - a. U of Virginia (Jefferson’s U) – pure knowledge w/ useful sciences
 - 3. Technical and professional education
 - a. No college to provide mechanic, merchant, agriculturist w/ professional prep.; learned thru work experience
- V. Movements for reform
 - A. Roots of reform – American moral mission
 - B. Varieties of reform: observance of Sabbath, dueling, crime/punishment, work conditions, poverty, handicap care, pacifism, foreign missions, temperance, women’s rights, slavery
 - C. Temperance (limiting alcohol)
 - 1. Heavy consumption of alcohol in the United States – 25 mil gal/ year hard spirits
 - 2. Arguments for temperance – neg. effects (Benjamin Rush); need reliable workers; connection btwn drinking & poverty
 - 3. Early efforts at reform – American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (1826), Sons of Temperance
 - 4. Development of the American Temperance Union, 1833; Total abstinence or moderation?
 - 5. State actions restricting alcohol
 - a. 1838 Mass. No sales less than 15 gal. prevented sales in taverns/ to poor
 - b. 1855 13 states with similar laws (incl. Mississippi, Maine)
 - D. Prison reform
 - 1. Growth of public institutions to treat social ills
 - 2. Prevention and rehabilitation versus punishment for crime
 - 3. Auburn prison system (1816)
 - a. Guilty experienced penitence & rehab not only punishment

- b. Labor → help to pay for prison; secure from abuse from other inmates
 - 4. Elimination of prison for debtors beginning 1821; 30 yrs. For complete elimination
- E. Reform in treatment of the insane
 - 1. Early state institutions for the insane
 - a. Held in closets, cages, chains, naked, beaten whipped etc.
 - 2. Work of Dorothea Lynde Dix
 - a. Change social attitude to mental illness, better treatment
- F. Crusade for women's rights
 - 1. Status of women in the antebellum period – similar to slave or free black
 - a. No professional jobs, higher education, voting, jury duty, control over property/children, wills, sue in court (last 2 w/o husband's approval)
 - 2. Seneca Falls Conference, 1848 – poorly organized
 - a. Declaration of Sentiments–paraphrased Declaration of Independence
 - 3. Hindrances to success – funds, antifeminists, strong language
 - 4. Evidences of success – Mississippi (1839) married women control over property
 - 5. Women in education, nursing, and other professions – still lower status than men
- G. Utopian communities
 - 1. Proliferation of utopian communities
 - 2. Nature of the Shaker communities (Ann Lee Stanley, aka Mother Ann)
 - a. Ritual dance → shakers
 - b. Prepare Shakers for perfection promised in Heaven
 - 3. Development and contributions of the Oneida Community (John Humphrey Noyes)
 - a. Complex marriage, free love; all married, open sex etc.
 - b. Animal traps, tableware → Oneida Community, Ltd. (flatware co. today)
 - 4. Concept of New Harmony, IN (Robert Owen: British)
 - a. Model factory town, supported labor legislation
 - b. Left New Harmony alone, fell apart, sold land
 - 5. The importance of Brook Farm – support of Emerson, Fuller; early think-tank; community school for tuition paying students
 - a. Nathaniel Hawthorne: unnatural, unsuitable, unreal life