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History

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Lecture 8: Early 19th century Cultural Trends

Second Great Awakening, 1820s-30s:

- Isn't a big deal until now, technically begins in 1790s
- Massive spread of Protestant denominations
 - Particularly Baptists and Methodists, using tactics of the first GA
- Tactics of 1st GA:
 - Emotional appeal → rhetoric skills, celebrity preachers, big emotional crowds
- One of the most important things: rejected predestination
 - The idea that who goes to heaven and who goes to hell has already been preordained, there is nothing you can do about it
 - Bleak way of viewing things:
 - How do you know?
 - Why do you even try?
- What they emphasized instead: free will & individual empowerment
 - God wants you to act independently and make your own decisions
 - Your choices will impact whether you go to hell/heaven
 - Can save your soul by changing your behavior
 - Breaks away from Congregationalist ideas → no more good things = good and bad things = God is unhappy
- Key leader: Charles Grandison Finney
 - His idea was perfectionism
 - All Christians should be aiming to be holy and should not rest until they are as perfect as god
 - As close to god-like as possible
 - True Christians will be working to make yourself + society as holy as possible
 - Goes hand in hand with individual empowerment
- So much more optimistic than ideas that came out of 1st GA
- Protestantism was not as plagued by fear and despair → now have a reason to hope because you can do something to change your circumstances
- Hopeful, actively participating
- More leadership roles for women
 - Want women to speak and participate more
 - Moving away from traditional feminine roles they had previously
 - Critics: you should convert to Christianity because it is rational instead of emotional → similar to Enlightenment

Transcendentalism, 1830-40s:

- Intellectual movement
- Europe and North America
- Not strictly religious, but building on ideas of 2nd GA
- Very strong faith and optimism in humanity
 - People have capacity for good
- Power of individual to improve themselves to reach full potential
 - Kind of like perfectionism, but not exactly religious
- Importance of seeking universal truth
 - Underlying truth that needs to be discovered
 - Do this through engagement with nature & physical world
- Different from 2nd GA: trying to harmonize science and religion
 - Want religious beliefs to match what they see in science
- Key people: Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - Important: personal divinity
 - God is within every human being → can change what people think about themselves
- Key people: Henry David Thoreau
 - Taking Emerson's theoretical ideas and making them practical
 - Civil disobedience
 - If the law is immoral, then you have the obligation to oppose unjust laws (even if it means breaking the law)
 - Don't have to pay taxes if they are being used for immoral purposes
 - Don't have to return enslaved people to their masters if it is abhorrent

Amos Bronson Alcott:

- One of most influential and least-well known transcendentalists
- Influential in areas of educational reform
 - Leading Boston school at the time said success of the student meant breaking the will & spirit of the student
 - Alcott says he doesn't think this is true → doesn't agree with transcendentalism
 - Does away with corporal punishment
 - Focused on things that engage the student
 - No rote memorization
 - Experiential education: discussion, journaling, field trips
 - Demands physical education and play for students
 - Early advocate for sex ed., when it was taboo for talking about it → scandalous for this
- His school is closed when he admits an African-American girl → his funding gets cut off
- A lot of his ideas are spread by Margaret Fuller
 - Controversial: undermines gender roles

Coming out of 2nd GA and transcendentalists: Utopian Experiments:

- People want to try and live in different ways to reach full potential
- First group: Shakers
 - Led by Mother Ann

- Their focus was celibacy and simplicity
 - No sex, simple life
 - All people are equal regardless of race or sex
 - Included non-Christians, African Americans, and indigenous people
 - 20+ different communities in NY and New England by 1850
- Second group: New Harmony
 - Established by Robert Owen
 - Focused on perfectionism
 - Wants to get rid of social class
 - Provide free public education
 - And abolish personal wealth
 - We get things like kindergartens and vocational educations in the US
- Oneida (founded in NY)
 - By John Humphrey Noyes
 - Emphasizes shared property
 - Also believe in shared relationships
 - Polyamory on a massive scale
 - “free love” and “complex marriage”
 - Had a 200 person group marriage
 - People are scandalized by this
 - Turn to industry: created Oneida Flatware
 - How they earn money, and still available today! Only \$60!
- A lot of these addressing boundaries on women

Women's Issues: Coverture:

- Legal doctrine up until late 19th century that relegates women as property of their husband
- Lose legal status, lose control of money, make contracts etc.
- Only people allowed these rights are femme sole, or single woman → married women cannot do this
- People are arguing about this → Abigail Adams: “remember the ladies” (1776)
 - Pushing for political equality back when US was fighting for independence
 - Only state that allowed women's rights at beginning of US: NJ allowed widowed or single property owning women could vote

Republican motherhood:

- Reigning concept of how women should behave
- Women should only be involved in politics through influencing their male relatives
- If this is their role, women should be well-educated in certain subjects
 - Need to raise their sons to be good US citizens
- This isn't working out because women are working in factories at this time
- This only works for elite, white women
 - Reality: most women need practical skills to help their working-class families financially
 - If you are enslaved, you are not getting an education
 - If you are a free Black women → mostly restricted to domestic labor roles

- Indigenous women: losing influence slowly, lost control of land
- An ideal, not being lived out by everyone

Women's sphere (true womanhood):

- Separation in public and private spheres of life
- As society becomes more and more industrialized
- Public sphere:
 - Men are working, going out to create wealth
- Private sphere:
 - Home, women are in charge, creating order and refuge for your family
- Republican motherhood is giving way for the idea of the woman's sphere (house is your domain, outside world is men's domain)
- This is not reality, but an ideal, as women are working in factories
- Some people pushing against this, saying women need more political involvement, etc

Women's Rights Advocates:

- Ideas that come out of these things: people striving for perfection, divine within people
- People advocating for slavery & women's rights
 - If everybody has some level of divine, everybody needs to be equal
- A lot of these people advocating are women
- Sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimke
 - Left the south because of their opposition to slavery
 - Traveled around the north advocating for women's equality and abolishment of slavery
 - Used both transcendental and religious principles
 - Scandalous because they spoke to mixed-gender crowds
- Sojourner Truth
 - Fled from slavery herself in NY before NY had gotten rid of slavery
 - Combined abolition and women's rights
 - She was enslaved & a woman → "ain't I a woman" phrase
 - Say all these nice things about what women should be, but says isn't she a woman too?
- Amelia Bloomer
 - More worried about society & fashion → less directly related to abolition movement
 - People should start working to change women's clothing styles to be more useful for the things they do in their day-to-day life, rather than dressing for style
 - Clothing reform
 - early pants for women → called pantaloons/Bloomers, after Amelia Bloomer
 - receives ridicule from conservatives in this era → women who wore these portrayed badly

Seneca Falls Convention, 1848:

- women's rights activists converge at this convention

- First ever women's convention to discuss social, civil, religious rights as well as the right to vote
- Organizers most well known:
 - Lucretia Mott
 - Elizabeth Cady Stanton
 - Susan B. Anthony
- Both men and women are attending this
 - People of a sex/gender need the other sex/gender for their movement to be accepted
- Produce the Declaration of Sentiments
 - Women's declaration of independence
 - Formatted the exact same as the Declaration
 - Creative reuse to prove a point
- Organize to lobby state legislatures
 - Voting is mostly handled at the state level
 - Only two ways you can get women's right to vote → either have to get the federal government to pass an amendment (which happens later) or they can lobby individual states to allow women to vote
 - Some states allow women to vote before they get the right to vote in the federal level → further west you are, the more likely it is to happen