

Age of the Common Man & the Belief in His Goodness and Perfectibility

The Emergence of Social Democracy

-By 1850, nearly half of all Americans lived west of the Appalachians!

-Between 1830 and 1850, the population of the U.S. nearly doubled!

► Providing Opportunities for Labor Improvement

■ Addressing the Changing Relationship Between Laborer and Employer

► Launching Humanitarian Crusades try to Improve the Condition of Man (& Woman)

-Early antislavery sentiment, before 1830, was primarily located in the South. There slavery went from being viewed as a necessary evil to economically indispensable, and finally a positive good.

Introduction: “The common man gained control of the nation’s political institutions and benefited economically from the opportunity provided by the Market and Transportation Revolutions in the early 1800s. With this power he found himself able to reshape America’s social life and thought to his own needs. Why not, he asked himself, use this new power to stamp out the last relics of aristocracy inherited from the colonial past, **recasting religion** in a more democratic mold, **rewriting literature and producing art** in terms understandable to all, **launching humanitarian crusades** to improve conditions, and **providing opportunities for labor improvement** that would allow the humblest commoner to scale the highest social peaks? With this as their goal, the ordinary people of the United States launched a social and intellectual revolution of more lasting importance than the political revolution (Jacksonian Democracy) of that same era.”

Conditions resulting from the Early Industrial Revolution needed to be addressed:

- Factory System Gap
- Factory Competition
- Immigration
- Panic of 1837

Gains:

- 10-Hour Day-N.H., 1847
- Debt Imprisonment Ended in North by 1840
- A Few Regulatory Laws Passed

Attempted Solutions:

- Trade Unionism-1827, *Workingman’s Party*
- Strikes, Mainly After 1837, Finally Supported-1842, *Commonwealth v. Hunt*
- Land Reform Demanded-Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*
- Communal (Utopian) Colonies Established-*New Harmony & Brook Farm*

Causes: Liberal European ideas, the political power of the common person, the concentration of workers in cities, and the rapid growth of the nation convinced reformers in the possibility of man’s perfection.

A Free Education Crusade was demanded to train intelligent voters, blur class lines, and remove children from industrial employment.

- *Horace Mann* of Massachusetts helped create a state Board of Education, 1837. Example set in North
- Primary Public Schools, Private Secondary Schools, *Oberlin Coed. College* (1833), Public Libraries & *Lyceum Movement* Established

An **Abolition Crusade** against slavery appeared as a result of the reform zeal in the 1830s. It differed from earlier anti-slavery movements in its emphasis on racial equality and its militancy. Some manifestations of the movement included:

- *William Lloyd Garrison’s* newspaper, *the Liberator*, 1831, supporting immediate abolition
- *Theodore Dwight Weld’s* religious movement supporting gradual abolition
- The Western dominated *American Anti-slavery Society*, 1833
- An “*underground railroad*,” a petition program, and the *Liberty Party*, 1840

■ Humanitarian Crusades to Improve the Condition of Man (& Woman), Continued...

-This era demonstrated the relationship between cultural progress and democratic gain.

-As is often the case in our history, this era's high idealism, progressive spirit, and humanitarian /reforming zeal culminated in war.

► Recasting Religion: The Second Great Awakening (c. 1830s)

-This event revived religious fervor throughout the US. Revival fever spread particularly in the "Burnt-Over District" of New York, where Charles Grandison Finney converted 100,000 people. Popular on the frontier were Camp Meetings and Revivals.

► Democratization Art and Literature; rewriting literature and produce art for the Common Man

A **crusade for women's rights** attempted to address the fact that females could not receive an education, vote or own property. This movement grew out of the fact that women were entering gainful occupations, and were participating in reform alongside men. The organization of feminism resulted in the following:

- The right to enter a few advanced schools on an equal basis with men
- Admission into some professions
- The right to own property in Mississippi (1839) and some other western states
- The first women's rights convention at *Seneca Falls*, New York
- Women like Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton become important national leaders

Demand for **temperance** reform attempting to moderate or end the consumption of alcohol began by 1820. Promoting this movement were the following groups:

- *Lyman Beecher*, who formed the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (1826)
- Washington Temperance Societies
- Propaganda like the book, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1853)

Treatment for the unfit became a concern for society and reformers like *Dorothea Dix*. Care for the insane, legal code reform, and prison reform showed this era's humanistic impulse.

Religious belief in the perfectibility of man led to the expansion of evangelical religions (Baptists & Methodists, believing in a reborn, or conversion, experience), rejecting congregationalism and rationalism. Important in this challenge was the belief that God was benevolent and anxious to help man achieve perfection on earth, and also that every man, through faith, could obtain divine help in improving himself. "*Religion is the work of man, it is something for man to do.*" *Charles Grandison Finney*, leading evangelical of mid-nineteenth century America

The formation of several new sects at this time also demonstrate the desire for perfection:

- John Humphrey Noyes and followers
- William Miller's Millerites
- Spiritualists
- Joseph Smith & the Mormons

A growing population inspired **writers and artists** to cater to the masses rather than the few. New England, containing the most industrialized and centralized population at the time, intellectually led this democratic change. Some examples of this intellectual renaissance include:

- Popular, Cheap and Sensational **Journalism** (*Horace Greeley's Tribune*, 1841)
- **Literary works** of *Washington Irving*, *James Fenimore Cooper*, *Herman Melville*, *Walt Whitman*, and *Edgar Allen Poe*
- The rise of **Transcendentalism**
- **New England Writers** like *James Wadsworth Longfellow*, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, and *Oliver Wendell Holmes*
- Growing interest in **Music and Popular Theater**
- **The Hudson River School** of Painting