

CHAPTER  
**8**

Summary

## TELESCOPING THE TIMES *Reforming American Society*

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** *A religious revival sweeps the United States. In its wake, many people press for reforms including the end of slavery, the granting of equal rights to women, and increased rights for workers.*

### 1 Religion Sparks Reform

**MAIN IDEA** *A renewal of religious sentiment—known as the Second Great Awakening—inspired a host of reform movements.*

Jacksonian democracy emphasized individualism and personal responsibility. A growing movement extended those ideas to religion. In a renewal of religious fervor called the Second Great Awakening, preachers told their audiences that each person had the responsibility to seek salvation. They said that people could change themselves—and society. Under the influence of Charles Grandison Finney and other preachers, more people attended church.

As the revival movement spread to the South, it helped African Americans develop a political voice. Richard Allen started an African American church in Philadelphia. In 1830, he began an annual convention of free blacks.

In New England, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau became the voice for a group practicing Transcendentalism. This philosophical and literary movement urged people to live simple lives and seek the simple truths found in nature rather than following an organized system of belief. Thoreau, in particular, advocated a way to protest unjust laws called civil disobedience. At the same time, the Unitarian church arose. It objected to revival meetings as too emotional. However, Unitarian ministers also stressed faith in the power of the individual.

Religious and social reform also inspired the establishment of ideal, or utopian communities. However, few of these communities lasted more than a few years. One of the most long-lasting was the Shaker communities, followers of a religion based on simplicity and non-violence.

Spurred by religious and reformist ideas, many people began to seek to improve society. Dorothea Dix campaigned for reform in the treatment of the mentally ill. Others improved the nation's prisons. In the 1830s, Americans began to insist on having tax-supported public schools. Horace Mann was a leading supporter of public education. By the 1850s, every state had a law creating such schools,

although the laws were more widely put into effect in the North.

### 2 Slavery and Abolition

**MAIN IDEA** *Slavery became an explosive issue, as more Americans joined reformers working to put an end to it.*

Abolitionists sought to abolish, or end, slavery. Free African Americans had urged the end of slavery for years; gradually more and more white Americans took up the cause. Some were encouraged by Finney and other preachers who called slavery a sin. William Lloyd Garrison started a newspaper, *The Liberator*, dedicated to abolition. He changed the abolitionists' goal from a gradual end of slavery to an immediate end.

Two prominent free blacks campaigned against slavery. David Walker, who moved from South to North, urged African Americans to fight for their freedom. Frederick Douglass, a slave who escaped, lectured against slavery and published his own anti-slavery newspaper.

As the slavery debate grew, the number of slaves increased as well, doubling from 1810 to 1830. The slave population changed, as the numbers of men and women became more equal. Most slaves—men, women, and children—worked from dawn to dusk on large plantations. Some worked in the plantation owner's house as butlers, cooks, and maids. Many African-American slaves supplied labor needed in cities, working in textile mills, mines, and lumber yards.

In 1831, a Virginia slave named Nat Turner organized a slave rebellion. He and his followers attacked five plantations, killing the inhabitants. In the next attack, many of Turner's band were killed. Later Turner was captured and hanged.

In the wake of the Turner rebellion, some Virginia lawmakers proposed abolishing slavery in the state. After a heated debate, the bill was defeated by a close vote. Another response to the Turner revolt was to tighten laws controlling blacks. Across the South, state legislatures passed laws restricting blacks' rights—to preach, testify in court, own property, or learn to read. Other Southerners

defended slavery. Most Southern ministers agreed that slavery and Christianity could coexist. In Congress, Northern representatives tried to introduce bills abolishing slavery. Southern members managed to pass a “gag rule” that banned debate on the issue.

### 3 Women and Reform

**MAIN IDEA** *Women reformers expanded their efforts from movements such as abolition and temperance to include women's rights.*

Women enjoyed few rights in the early 1800s. Social custom—which historians now call the cult of domesticity—required them to restrict themselves to caring for the house. While about one in ten worked outside the home, they earned only half of what men earned for doing the same job. Women could not vote or serve on juries. Many states required wives to give their property to their husbands.

Many middle-class white women, inspired by the Second Great Awakening, joined the reform movements of the time. Sarah and Angelina Grimké, though they came from a slaveholding family of the South, wrote and lectured against slavery. Mary Vaughan and other women joined the temperance movement, which tried to ban alcohol. Many women tried to increase the educational opportunities for females. Emma Willard opened a school for girls. In 1837, Mary Lyon founded the women's school that became Mount Holyoke College, and Oberlin College admitted women. Some women campaigned to improve women's health. Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to graduate from medical college and opened a hospital for women. One African-American woman took the name Sojourner Truth when she decided to travel throughout the country urging the abolition of slavery. She also was an effective speaker for women's rights.

Some women began to campaign for women's rights. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the Seneca Falls Convention. At this meeting, more than 300 women—and men—met and adopted a “Declaration of Sentiments” that urged laws to ensure the equal rights of women, including the right to vote.

### 4 The Changing Workplace

**MAIN IDEA** *A growing industrial work force faced problems arising from manufacturing under the factory system.*

The rise of factories altered working life. Before the 1820s, textile makers had spun thread in factories and used people working at home to make clothing. By the 1830s, mills had introduced the total manufacture of clothing in the factory. Other industries took up the factory system. Once, skilled craft workers had made products by hand. Now unskilled workers used machines to make goods. Many left farms to work in these factories.

In the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, factory workers were young, unmarried girls. Factory owners preferred young girls because they were paid less than male workers. Conditions were harsh, as girls were forced to work in heat and darkness. When the mills cut their wages in 1834, 800 mill girls went on strike. They stopped work and demanded their wages. They were forced to give in, and they also lost another strike two years later.

Workers in many industries struck dozens of times in the 1830s and 1840s. Factory owners won most of the time, however. Sometimes they simply hired new workers—often immigrants—willing to work for less.

About 3 million immigrants came to the United States from 1845 to 1854. Many immigrants in the period came from Ireland, where they escaped famine caused by a massive failure in the potato crop. Irish immigrants tended to cluster in the large cities of the East. They faced prejudice because they were poor and Roman Catholic.

Some immigrants joined trade unions, which formed a National Trades' Union in 1834. Bankers and factory owners tried to suppress unions. In 1842, the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled for the first time that workers had the right to strike.

### Review

1. How did the Second Great Awakening contribute to reform movements?
2. What resulted from the Nat Turner Rebellion?
3. How did women's position contribute to the rise of a women's movement?
4. What problems did industrial workers have?