
The Second Great Awakening: Transcendentalism Ideals

As America started developing industrially and economically, Americans started looking into themselves, questioning the way they lived and looked towards ways of improvement to refine themselves. However, many controversial topics brought ideas such as slavery into questioning, increasing the tensions developed due to the radically different opinions on these ideas. With these topics came religious and intellectual movements that tried to solve the problems with reasoning, resulting in the development of reform movements. Although there was some thought to reform movements in the United States before the nineteenth century, the mid-nineteenth century saw them becoming more widespread, with the rise of the Second Great Awakening, transcendentalism ideals, and the Enlightenment.

The Second Great Awakening began to come into full effect during the late 1700s and early 1800s when preachers began teaching of revivalism to congregations of men and women. Rejecting Calvinists' teachings that taught people to believe in "human depravity and weakness", preachers instead emphasized the importance of free will and "testified to the growing belief that people could shape their destiny."

Lyman Beecher, a well-known Congregationalist clergyman, began to advocate for moral reform, warning that "if reformation did not occur, the nation's doom was assured." He declared for the formation of reform movements, to "awaken the public attention,' spread 'moral instruction,' and correct 'the public opinion.'" During the early 1800s, alcoholism had reached its peak, even resulting in the deaths of some, including Daniel Tompkins. Workers also drank on the job, creating problems as many could not afford the costs and consequences of alcohol. As alcoholism became an even more apparent issue, evangelical Protestants and others sought to terminate the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Creating the American Temperance Society, Protestants used ideas from the Second Great Awakening to appeal to members in curbing their alcoholism. The society employed confessions and prayers along with emotional conversion, and with these tactics succeeded in having in hundreds of people taking the temperance pledge where people vowed not to drink alcohol. Other societies were also created like the Temperance Society, educating of the dangers of drink. Although Beecher was also an advocate for temperance and used ideas of moral reform to inspire congregations to take the pledge, he warned that voluntary abstinence, although successful, would not be effective in the long-term. Describing that alcoholism is a sin and evil, he told people to "look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright". Claiming that voluntary abstinence would not be effective, Beecher called for nationwide bans on alcohol, which eventually led to Prohibition.

The Second Great Awakening also impacted the women's rights reform movement. When Reverend Samuel Hopkins preached that individual salvation was associated with religious benevolence, many began to find organizations to help the charity, such as humane societies. As the Second Great Awakening disregarded race, sex, age, and said that everyone has a chance to create a relationship with God and achieve salvation, more women began to actively speak up for their rights and became more seen in the public life. Many women began reform groups to put an end to prostitution and other events that would corrupt a young woman's morals. Dorothea Dix was an important role model for the women who began to improve

institutions. Dix devoted her life to raising awareness and build asylums for the mentally ill, visiting hundred of prisons and hospitals in an attempt to try and bring improvement to their facilities. Luther V. Bell was an avid supporter of Dix's work, who worked at one of the improved hospitals, and in a letter addressed to Dix, he wrote, "I pray that you may have a reward higher than the applause of this world... [here] is a short statement touching a case of a young man in the poorhouse at Groton", and proceeded to discuss the improvement of a young man who had been transferred from a mental prison to one of Dix's improved asylums. This example of an improved hospital shows that Dix's work significantly helped the mentally ill to receive the proper treatment they needed. Other women became prominent in the role of public education. Following Horace Mann's role in education where he increased the school year and created a curriculum that would create a better education for students, many women became teachers and founded academies for young women.

Catherine Beecher was a leading woman in education, and through her arguments that women were better suited as teachers than men, women became prominent figures in the education system. Transcendentalism was an intellectual movement formed from the religious ideals of New England, branched off from the Romanticism movement. Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson emphasized the importance and beauty of nature and condemned industrialization. He stressed the importance self-reliance and taught that people must "focus on moral actions and rejoice in goodness."

A group of transcendentalists moved to a farm they named Brook farm, where they attempted to have "an idyllic [life] that involved farm work by day and creative work by candlelight at night." When Brook Farm ultimately failed due to "members becoming disillusioned by its mission, as well as financial challenges and other problems, and squabbling amongst themselves", many transcendentalists starting turning towards the abolition movement, thus beginning this critical movement. Although abolitionism drew on ideas of transcendentalism of focusing on moral actions, there were also some ideas from the Second Great Awakening as well, from those who claimed that slavery was a sin. Dismissing those who suggested for eventual emancipation, abolitionists demanded immediate emancipation, and spread their message through newspapers, pamphlets, and books.

The Underground Railroad helped thousands of slaves escape to the North, and abolitionists bombarded Congress with many petitions to end slavery. Speakers such as Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, and Lucy Stone became famous for their influence on the movement. William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist famous for his determination published *The Liberator* and also created the American Anti-Slavery Society, "assenting to the self-evident truth... that all men are created equal... with certain inalienable rights... [he] shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of [the] slave population."

The abolition movement was widely supported among women, who felt as though their voices were finally being heard through supporting the abolition movement, and the American Anti-Slavery Society supported women's rights as well. However, some men opposed the idea of granting women equal rights and formed a new society called the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lucretia Mott, the Grimke sisters were among the strong supporters of abolitionism who eventually paved the way for the women's rights movement. "Thinking about the condition of slaves raised their awareness of their own subordinate status. Many women, including most notably, Angelina Grimke in "Appeal to the Christian Ladies of the South," could see parallels between their status and those of slaves." It

was while being denied the right to speak because of their sex at the World Antislavery Convention in London in 1840,” writes historian Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, “that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton hatched the idea for the women’s rights convention, held in Seneca Falls New York, eight years later.”