

INTRODUCTION TO UNITS 1, 2 & 3

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During the years from the nonpartisan reelection of James Monroe in 1820 and the Compromise of 1850, the United States lived very much to itself. Contacts with Europe were slighter than ever before or since. Out of the ferment of the Revolution there emerged two forces of self-trust and expansion. Each advanced the other, yet at the same time each contravened the other: the thrust of expansion drove individuals and the states farther apart while the pull of self-trust held them together in one nation. Self-trust, when exercised by a people, is nationalism -in this instance, the brash(audaz) yet healthy assurance of a youthful country secure in its achievements and its potentialities. This nationalism of the thirties and forties was often provincial; it was noisy and at the same time realistic. In 1823, the president James Monroe announced that the young republic had become the protector of a hemisphere: "The American continents are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers".

Meanwhile the American people were congratulating themselves on the success of their experiment in republicanism. The division of opinion in the later eighteenth century between monarchists and republicans now disappeared, and monarchy became a symbol of all that Americans hated. A steadily increasing respect for and reliance on the idea of the Union one and indivisible, further strengthened egocentric Americanism. Respect for the Federal Constitution continued to grow until that instrument and the doctrine of the Union became, in the minds of the nationalists, the two great

bulwarks(bastiones) of the Republic. Reinterpreted in terms of the nineteenth century, the Puritan thesis that God's hand had been evident in every incident in the colonization of New England became the cult of *manifest destiny*. The United States had been set apart by divine Providence or by fate as the scene of a great, and perhaps a final experiment in free government. The success of this experiment now made evident that Americans were indeed a chosen nation. The honest concern of the American people for the welfare of all mankind gave a certain dignity to this theory of manifest destiny and a comfortable feeling of self-righteousness(fariseísmo) to its exponents.

Among the older men of letters, Irving and Cooper groped(struggled) for security, now abroad and now at home; but the young men put their trust in themselves and their new world (Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau)

From 1820 to 1850, the westward migration pushed on into Texas, into Oregon, and to the Golden Gate; the territory of the United States increased by half, and the Americans were masters of three million square miles of land (30 times the land of British Isles). The population rose from 9 million in 1820 to 23 million in 1850 (= British Isles). American brag may have offended foreign ears, but it was often confirmed by history. There were sectional differences in the pattern of agrarian-industrial conflict of the period (North-South). But the value of industrial property was doubling every ten years. The factory itself was glorified by capitalists as a Utopia where young men and women from the back country took on urban culture, but the American people as a whole remained agrarian-minded.

The stronghold(baluart) of democracy was the new West and its new states. Here backwoodsmen and farmers kept alive the radicalism of the left-wing Jeffersonians and of Shay's rebellion, until in 1828 their man Jackson went to the White House. Jackson destroyed the National Bank (symbol of

privilege and wealth) and gave support to equalitarian practices of frequent elections, increase of elective offices and rotation in office.

In religion, the result of self-trust was diffusion in the form of voluntarism, secularization, and sectarianism. The process of separation of church and state, which had been initiated in the eighteenth century, came to its conclusion in 1833 when Massachusetts broke all official ties between government and religion. The success with which minorities shaped new religions to fit their own needs is illustrated by the history of transcendentalism. Its exponents were a small group of New England intellectuals who, after rejecting both rationalism and Calvinism, built their own faith around the divinity of man. Their nucleus was the informal Transcendentalist Club, their organ was the *Dial*, and their most influential spokesmen were William Ellery Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson pointed out its individualistic tendencies by stressing intuition, Platonic idealism (reality in conscience and reason), and self-reliance. (Also split of Baptism and Methodism)

Humanitarianism in its broadest aspects may have helped to unify American society, but in the daily living of individuals it provoked dissent and acrimony (acritud). An insistence was the temperance movement, which in 1826 enlisted more than a million Americans in a crusade directed not toward temperance but toward total abstinence. While humanitarian movements clashed and rose or fell, one question grew more insistent: What shall be the final attitude of the United States toward slavery?

Only a nation endowed with perfect wisdom could have affected a final reconciliation between the self-trust and the expansion of these years. In the realm of public affairs, the period began and ended in compromise. Men's minds were whirling with the claims of nationalism and sectionalism,

industrialism and natural rights, slavery and the will of God, equality and a stake(apuesta) in society, revivalism, public improvements, the emancipation of women, manifest destiny, progress.

After the Missouri Compromise of 1829 (Missouri to South, Maine to North, prohibition of slavery in Louisiana), the Compromise of 1833 (South loses force in the Government and Jackson's Force Bill of popular sovereignty), the Compromise of 1850 (slave trade but not slavery was abolished in the Columbia District), Civil War was inevitable.