

the Cherokee living within its boundaries. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, Chief Justice John Marshall decreed that the tribe was not subject to state laws, but he also denied that it was sovereign and independent. Rather, the Cherokee were wards of the federal government. They were, he declared, "domestic dependents in a state of pupilage."

Georgia, of course, paid no attention to the ruling and had the implicit approval of President Jackson. The Georgia legislature followed through by prohibiting white men from entering Indian territory without the state's explicit permission. Two missionaries—Samuel Worcester and Dr. Elizur Butler—refused to comply and were imprisoned. They sued and in the case *Worcester v. Georgia* the Supreme Court ruled against the state and ordered it not to interfere. Whereupon Jackson stepped in and pressured the governor of Georgia, Wilson Lumpkin, to free the missionaries at the same time he urged the Indians to move. Through fraud and chicanery, a removal treaty—the Treaty of New Echota—was approved by the Cherokee Nation and the tribe was rounded up, its members held in stockades while they awaited transport, and then hurried westward along what the Indians called a "Trail of Tears." It was an 800-mile journey of sickness, misery, and death. Some 18,000 Cherokee were removed from their homeland, and 4,000 of them died along the way.

One reason Jackson was anxious to settle the quarrel with Georgia was the fact that a greater crisis had developed with South Carolina, and the President wanted to bring it to a speedy conclusion without provoking civil war. The last thing he needed was a confrontation with Georgia when he was about to face down the nullifiers in South Carolina.

The quarrel began over passage of the Tariff of Abominations and the doctrine put forward anonymously by Calhoun that the states could reject federal laws which violated their rights. This notion of "interposition" would protect minority rights, declared Calhoun, and prevent the tyranny of the majority, always a danger in a democratic society. States must remain strong so that they can block the central government from assuming absolute authority. It was an additional check in a federal system of checks and balances. It was the only way of protecting liberty and individual rights.

These views received a thorough airing in January 1830, at the very start of Jackson's administration, when Daniel Webster of Massachu-

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setts and Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina got into a fierce debate on the Senate floor over the nature of the Union. Hayne defended the Calhoun doctrine and argued that the Union could last only if the rights of the states—including their right to hold slaves—were respected and protected. The national government was nothing but the agent of the states. States were sovereign, and the Union was simply a compact of states.

Webster countered in his famous second reply to Hayne, in which he denied that the Union was a confederation of states. Rather, it was a Union of people. "I go for the Constitution as it is, and for the Union as it is," he thundered. "It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." As for the argument that liberty can be safeguarded only by strengthening the states, Webster insisted that individual liberty depended on the perpetuation of the Union. "Liberty and Union," he cried, "now and forever, one and inseparable."

Jackson thoroughly agreed. At a commemorative celebration to honor Thomas Jefferson on April 13, 1830, many dignitaries were present, including Calhoun. Several toasts were offered, and Jackson proposed the first. According to tradition he looked squarely at Calhoun and said, "Our Union, *it must be preserved.*" Calhoun responded with, "Our Union, next to our liberty, the most dear; may we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the States and distributing equally the benefit and burden of the Union." Jackson later allowed the word "federal" to be added to his toast, so that it declared, "Our federal Union, *it must be preserved.*"

Congress attempted to settle the problem by passing the Tariff of 1832, which removed some of the abominations of the Tariff of 1828. But it merely modified—it did not appreciably lower—the rates, and the effort proved unsatisfactory to the nullifiers. Whereupon the governor of South Carolina called a special session of the state legislature, which in turn ordered an elected convention to meet on November 19, 1832, to take appropriate action. When this convention assembled, the nullifiers proposed and obtained passage of an Ordinance of Nullification on November 24 by a vote of 136 to 26, declaring the tariff laws of 1828 and 1832 to be "null, void, and no law, nor binding" on South Carolina, its officers, or its citizens.

This was quite a challenge. The convention further decreed that after February 1, 1833, it would be unlawful to collect the tariff duties imposed by the nullified law, and warned the federal government against attempting to force compliance, threatening secession and the establishment of a "separate Government."

Jackson responded immediately with a Proclamation on December 10, 1832, in which he reminded the people of South Carolina, his native state, that as President he had the duty and responsibility of enforcing the laws of the United States. "Those who told you that you might peacefully prevent their execution deceived you. . . . Disunion by armed force is *treason*. Are you really ready to incur its guilt? . . . On your unhappy State will inevitably fall all the evils of the conflict you force upon the Government of your country."

More importantly, Jackson declared, "I consider . . . the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one State, *incompatible with the existence of the Union*." The people, not the states, he went on, formed the Union. The people are the sovereign power, and the Union is perpetual. Jackson was the first President to announce publicly that the Union is indivisible, a position endorsed by some Americans at the time but certainly not by all. To southerners especially, the right of secession was fundamental in a free society.

In the interim Calhoun resigned as Vice President and had himself elected to the Senate, where he hoped to block any action the government might attempt against his state. Henry Clay, now a senator from Kentucky, was also anxious to prevent bloodshed, and through his skillful handling of a new tariff bill succeeded in satisfying the nullifiers. The Tariff of 1833 provided a ten-year truce during which rates would slowly fall until, at the end of that period, duties would stand at a uniform twenty percent ad valorem rate and remain there. Jackson signed both this Compromise Tariff and a Force Bill that gave him the authority to deploy the military to put down any attempt at armed rebellion.

South Carolina quickly convened another convention and expressed its approval of the Compromise by repealing its Ordinance of Nullification. But it showed its defiance by nullifying the Force Bill. "If this is to be no more than a swaggering conclusion of a blustering drama," snorted the *Washington Globe*, the administration's mouthpiece, "it will

speedily be consigned to the contempt of an enlightened and patriotic public."

"Nullification is dead," Jackson rightly concluded. But the danger inherent in the controversy still lingered on. "The next pretext," he warned, "will be the negro or slavery question."

AT THE TIME he issued his Proclamation of December 10, Jackson had just won reelection as President over Henry Clay. The major issue of the campaign involved the rechartering of the Second National Bank of the United States (BUS). It had developed when the President, in his first annual message to Congress, had asked for changes in the operation of the BUS. Headquartered in Philadelphia with twenty-six branches throughout the country, the institution was run by a board of twenty-five directors, of whom five were appointed by the government and the rest were chosen by stockholders. But the actual manager of the Bank's affairs was its president, Nicholas Biddle, a well-educated, extremely intelligent scion of a wealthy and socially prominent Philadelphia family.

Congress paid no mind to the President's call for changes, because his claim that it had failed to provide the nation with sound credit and currency was patently untrue. But a more important reason for Jackson's hostility arose from his distrust of speculation and paper money, a distrust that emanated from a horrible experience he endured as a young man, when he almost landed in debtors' prison. And lately he began to notice that the BUS used its influence and money to arrange the election of individuals who were friendly toward it and would support its interests. Furthermore, as someone totally dedicated to the sovereignty of the people, he felt that the Bank tended to serve the interests of the wealthier classes in America at the expense of ordinary citizens.

The matter finally came to a head when Henry Clay proposed that Congress renew the Bank's charter four years before it was due to expire. He had a political objective. He thought this might provide the issue by which he could defeat Old Hickory in the presidential election of 1832. He figured that if Jackson signed the legislation it would end all the nonsense about improving the institution. But if he vetoed it,

then Clay could challenge Jackson in the election and accuse him of destroying a necessary financial institution, one that provided the people with sound credit and currency. Clay was certain that citizens would never permit the destruction of the BUS; that they would chose him over Old Hickory; and that he, as President, would then sign a new rechartering bill.

So a bank bill was introduced in January 1832, and by July it had passed both houses of Congress. On July 10 Jackson sent it back with a ringing veto, one of the most important presidential vetoes in American history. What it did was open new ground for a President to reject a bill. Previously, all vetoes cited a constitutional reason for rejection of a bill. In the present veto, Jackson did include his constitutional objection, but he also went far beyond that. He cited political, economic, and social reasons for his action. He argued that by this charter the government had granted the Bank monopolistic advantages, where by right it should act as an honest broker among all classes and all interests. He accused the BUS of interfering in the electoral process by favoring certain candidates over others, and thus tampering with the democratic system of government. Moreover, some of its investors were foreigners, which meant that they were enriched from the profits provided by American taxpayers. He also challenged the decision of the Supreme Court about the Bank's constitutionality. In *McCulloch v. Maryland*, Chief Justice John Marshall agreed with Alexander Hamilton's contention that Congress possessed an implied power to create the Bank inasmuch as it was "necessary and proper" to fulfill the legislature's enumerated responsibilities. "To this conclusion," said Jackson in his veto message, "I cannot assent." Both Congress and the President "must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. . . . The authority of the Supreme Court must not be permitted to control the Congress or the Executive when acting in their legislative capacities, but to have only such influence as the force of their reasoning may deserve."

He ended his message with a dynamite passage. "It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes." When the laws attempt to make "the rich richer, and the potent more powerful," he continued, "the humble members of society—the farmers, the mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a

right to complain of the injustice of their Government." Government must treat all equally, rich and poor, and this Bank bill constitutes a "wide and unnecessary" departure from that principle.

What Jackson did was put Congress on notice that he was a participant in the legislative process. Since he could invalidate a bill for any reason—not simply the dubious constitutionality of a measure—it behooved legislators to check with the President to see if he had any objection to their intended action. If they did not, if they disregarded his authority in the matter, they risked a veto, which, under ordinary circumstances, is extremely difficult to override, since it needs a two-thirds vote from both houses of Congress.

Friends of the BUS were appalled. It was a "manifesto of anarchy," snarled Nicholas Biddle, "such as Marat and Robespierre might have issued to the mobs" during the French Revolution. Senator Daniel Webster was incensed. Jackson, he thundered, "claims for the President, not the power of approval, but the primary power of originating laws." Naturally, Clay agreed. The message, he said, was "a perversion of the veto power."

The founders of this country, in writing the Constitution, had attempted to make Congress the centerpiece of government. Here Jackson attempted to alter that arrangement by making the President the head of government. "Congress is the *democratic* branch of the government," said the *National Intelligencer*, not the executive. "If power is safe anywhere in a Republic it is safe with the representatives."

Madison's claim that the executive was the weaker branch of government had suddenly changed. The reverse was now true. "We have arrived at a new epoch," declared Webster. "We are entering on experiments with the government and the Constitution, hitherto untried, and of fearful and appalling aspect."

Shortly after Jackson defeated Clay in the presidential election of 1828, he decided to remove the government's deposits from the BUS. When his secretary of the treasury refused to carry out his order and refused to resign, Jackson fired him, the first cabinet officer to be so removed. And this was an important first. It meant that the President had absolute control over the entire administrative apparatus.

In the process of withdrawing government funds from the BUS, the administration drew out the money it needed to operate while new

revenues were deposited in selected state banks in the major cities, called "pet" banks by the opposition. In retaliation, Biddle ordered a general curtailment of loans throughout the banking system. He refused to increase discounts, and he restricted discounted bills of exchange to ninety days. "This worthy President thinks that because he has scalped Indians and imprisoned Judges"—this was a reference to Jackson's imprisonment of Judge Dominick Hall for issuing a writ of habeas corpus to release a journalist in defiance of Jackson's order establishing martial law in New Orleans in 1815—"he is to have his way with the Bank. He is mistaken." As a result of Biddle's actions the country was pitched into a sharp recession in the winter of 1833-1834.

Meanwhile the Senate, under the prodding of Henry Clay, passed a resolution on March 28, 1834, censuring Jackson for assuming "upon himself authority and power not conferred by the Constitution and laws, but in derogation of both." The vote was 26 to 20. Outraged, the President fired back a "Protest" on April 15, denying the Senate's right under the Constitution to "take up, consider, and decide upon the official acts of the President." Impeachment is the exclusive right of the House of Representatives, he went on, and the Senate cannot attempt what in effect is a resolution of impeachment. He then added something that had been implicit in many of his previous actions and messages: that he was the direct representative of all the people and responsible to them.

Along with many other senators, Daniel Webster denounced Jackson's "outrageous contentions." Where is the "authority for saying the President is *the direct representative of the People?* . . . I hold this, Sir, to be a mere assumption, and dangerous assumption." If he is allowed to claim that he is the "SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, then, I say, Sir, that the government . . . has already a master. I deny the sentiment . . . and protest the language."

It was during this prolonged controversy over the BUS, the transfer of government deposits to pet banks, and the censure motion that a new party arose from the remnants of the Federalist and National Republican parties, along with some nullifiers and those who abominated Jackson's policies and conduct. They called themselves Whigs, a reference to those in their colonial past who opposed the king and supported republican rule. They dubbed Jackson "King Andrew," and vowed to overturn all his works.

Jackson, during his two terms in office, actually redefined the role of the President, placing him squarely at the head of the government. And this redefinition won immediate acceptance by the electorate. Sighed one senator, "Until the President developed the faculties of the Executive power, all men thought it inferior to the legislature—he manifestly thinks it superior; and in his hands the monarchical part of the Government (for the Executive is monarchical . . .) has proved far stronger than the representatives of the States." The President, not Congress, had become the instrument of the popular will.

BIDDLE'S ACTION IN initiating a financial panic proved to the American people that they did not want an unelected controller of the nation's finances with power to dictate to the government and force it into submission. The House of Representatives agreed. Under Democratic leadership, it passed a series of resolutions that condemned the Bank for calling in loans and attempting to force a recharter by financial pressure. The House rejected rechartering, advised that government funds be kept in the pet banks, and called for an investigation of the operations of the BUS and the causes of the financial panic. And that about killed the bank. "The Bank is dead," ventured one cabinet officer. It had proved itself unworthy of trust. Jackson, of course, was delighted. "I have obtained a glorious triumph," he exulted. The House resolutions "has put to death that mammoth of corruption and power, the Bank of the United States."

To a very large extent this "Bank War," as it has been called, was a power struggle between Andrew Jackson, who represented democratic government as he understood it, and Nicholas Biddle, who represented privilege and financial control. And the issue was whether elected officials or captains of industry would determine the direction and future course of the country. In a real sense it was a question of whether this nation could survive as a democracy if private, unaccountable concentrations of wealth were more powerful than democratically elected officials of the government. And this power struggle has influenced reformers and progressives throughout the history of the United States. Again and again, it has happened that individuals and groups have attempted to use the government to advance their special interests, and at

times they have gotten away with it. Only a vigilant electorate can prevent this. Today lobbyists regularly corrupt congressmen to better serve their clients, and the people suffer as a result.

In addition, Jackson's action and claims altered the relationship between the executive and the electorate. Insisting on his position as representative of all the people, Jackson created a national power base on which presidential authority could securely rest. When he opted to destroy the BUS and Congress thwarted his will, he turned to the people and asked for their support. This was the first time in American history that a major issue was taken to the people for resolution. That is rarely done, even today. People hate to decide issues. They are not always certain they are competent to decide momentous questions. Members of Congress are chosen to perform this duty and are paid accordingly. But in 1832 the future of the Bank rested on whether the electorate would choose Jackson or Clay. In favoring Old Hickory so decisively, the people rallied to him and give him a mandate to destroy the BUS, or so he claimed, despite fierce congressional opposition. Presidential power had been buttressed by mass support. The executive office would never be the same again. All it takes is a President with determination, popular support, and leadership skills to direct both domestic and foreign policy and decide the future course of American history.

Unfortunately, pet banks did not and could not replace a functioning central bank so that the nation's currency and credit would be respected throughout the world. For almost 100 years the nation did without central banking, until passage of the Federal Reserve System during the administration of Woodrow Wilson. Out from under the control of the BUS, state banks enjoyed considerable freedom and took advantage of it by irresponsibly issuing paper money without adequate security. To stop this inflation of the currency, Jackson issued his Specie Circular in 1836, which required gold and silver for the purchase of land from the government. One of the most important components of the economy was the sale of public land. Nevertheless, the continued flood of paper currency helped sustain and augment industrial growth and the expansion of the country.

But disaster soon struck. Jackson was not two weeks from leaving the presidency to his successor, Martin Van Buren, who won election

over such Whigs as Daniel Webster, Hugh L. White, and William Henry Harrison, when the nation suffered a financial collapse. On March 17, 1837, the I. and L. Joseph Company of New York, one of the largest dealers in domestic exchange, went bankrupt because of the failure of the New Orleans cotton market. This set off a chain reaction in which many banks and a variety of commercial and mercantile enterprises collapsed. Over the next several months many other bankruptcies followed, and this Panic of 1837 was so severe that it lasted for the remainder of the decade and well in the 1840s.

VAN BUREN SPENT his entire administration trying to cope with this depression, but the best he could do was win passage of the Independent Treasury—a “divorce” or subtreasury plan—which required that public money be managed by the government itself without the assistance of private banks. Deposits of cash would be stored in subtreasury buildings in the leading cities of the country and withdrawn as needed by the government. This plan was repealed in John Tyler’s administration, which followed Van Buren’s, but was reenacted in the administration of James Knox Polk. The Independent Treasury remained the basic banking system for the next seventy years.

The Panic of 1837 also toppled Van Buren from office when he ran for reelection in 1840. General William Henry Harrison, presumably another version of the military hero who had defeated Indians at the Battle of Tippecanoe Creek in 1811; and his running mate, John Tyler of Virginia, overwhelmed the Little Magician, in a rollicking campaign of songs, parades, noise, and nonsense. “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too,” shouted the Whigs; “Van, Van is a used-up man.” Complete with hard cider, coonskin hats, rolling balls, and other such paraphernalia, this campaign was one of the liveliest and funniest in American history. Was this another result of a democracy run wild? Another effect of Jacksonian Democracy? Had the nation abandoned rationality and statesmanship for bombast and mindless buffoonery? Many Whigs thought so, and feared that this development would in time destroy the Republic. Still they won.

In the election, Harrison captured nineteen of the twenty-six states for a total count of 214 electoral votes to Van Buren’s 60. A third party

that favored the abolition of slavery, the Liberty Party, nominated James G. Birney, who garnered a little over 7,000 popular but no electoral votes.

The appearance of the Liberty Party as an instrument for ending slavery in the United States was only one expression of a general feeling around the country that horrible conditions existed in society and needed to be reformed. This zeal for reform—or, as Ralph Waldo Emerson called it, “the demon of reform”—had infected a population in every section of the nation. It was not abolition alone that stirred people to action but a wide range of causes that were expected to revitalize and humanize social institutions.

Much of this enthusiasm carried forward from the Enlightenment into a new age of Romanticism. Americans of this era believed in the perfectability of man and the inevitability of improvement. They preached the need to improve the conditions in which men and women worked and lived—the need, as one reformer declared, “to raise the life of man by putting it in harmony with his idea of the Beautiful and the Just.” Emerson expressed this romantic notion when he said that “one day all men will be lovers; and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine.”

Improve society. Reform what is wrong. Fix what is broken. This, insisted these Romantics, was an obligation upon all, and human beings had the capacity to achieve these goals because they could “transcend” experience and reason and through their intuitive powers discover universal truths. A group of men and women in New England, including Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Orestes Brownson, Margaret Fuller, Henry Thoreau, and Emerson, espoused this “Transcendental” idea by proclaiming that man was not only good but divine. The old Puritan notion about man’s sinfulness was replaced by a belief in his divinity. “Pantheism is said to sink man and nature in God,” wrote one Transcendentalist; “Materialism to sink God and man in nature; and Transcendentalism to sink God and nature in man.”

Transcendentalists saw beauty in nature but ugliness in a materialistic society full of greed and avarice. “I know of no country, indeed,” declared Alexis de Tocqueville, “where the love of money has taken

stronger hold of the affections of men" than in the United States. Still, man had it in his power to change this because he was "endowed with an infinite faculty for improvement." This faculty emanated from an American belief in equality, Tocqueville insisted. Clergymen who were at the forefront of the Transcendentalist movement put it another way, a more romantic way. For example, Emerson declared, "What is man born for but to be a Reformer, a Re-Maker of what man has made, a renouncer of lies, a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all?"

At first these Transcendentalists met at George Ripley's home in Boston to discuss their beliefs and ideas, but then a few of them founded a community called Brook Farm in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, where they could live together and put their ideas into practice. The farm never numbered more than 150, but they were visited by thousands who came to hear what they had to say. This experiment in communal living attracted many Americans, although Brook Farm died out after a disastrous fire in 1847.

But communitarianism itself enjoyed a remarkable spurt when any number of communities were established to create cooperative units whereby individuals would be provided with a more harmonious way of life. They were called "phalanxes" and were first introduced by Charles Fourier, a French socialist. Members of these phalanxes would live together and work at tasks they enjoyed and found fulfilling. Presumably such an environment would result in a productive society in which all the members would benefit equally. Fourier's ideas were propagated in this country in 1840 by Albert Brisbane of New York, whose book *Social Destiny of Man* described the "vast and foolish waste which results from our present social mechanism and . . . the colossal economics and profits which would arise from Association and Combination in industrial interests."

Another, and different, communal experiment was founded by Robert Owen, a successful Scot manufacturer, known for his humanitarian activities. He founded his community in New Harmony, Indiana. Through collective ownership of property and cooperative labor, New Harmony was expected to flourish as a model society in which everyone would lead a happy and productive life and poverty and crime

would be extinguished. But within two years this experiment failed. Owen's rather strange ideas about "free love," among other things, generated internal discord and conflict.

Much more successful attempts at communal living had a religious basis. The most notable, perhaps, was the Shaker movement, founded by Mother Ann Lee, an Englishwoman who came to the United States in 1776 and settled in Albany, New York. She taught that God had a dual personality: male as exemplified by Christ; and female, which her followers believed she epitomized. She preached the evil of sexual lust and insisted that her followers practice celibacy, which meant that their society continually needed converts to survive. Her disciples were known as Shakers because of the religious dance they practiced. They would form lines, three abreast, and race around the room in a wild gallop, presumably shaking sin from their bodies, and singing as loudly as possible. By the 1840s some 6,000 Shakers resided in over two dozen communities that had been established from Maine to Indiana. The Shaker movement continued well into the twentieth century but finally died out.

Perhaps the most remarkable and certainly the most distinctively American and important religious group to appear during the Jacksonian era were the Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, founded by Joseph Smith. He claimed he was visited and instructed by an angel, Moroni, to dig up and transcribe a book written on golden plates and buried in a stone box. The resulting Book of Mormon, published in 1830, purported to provide an account of the lost tribes of Israel. And the name Mormon was derived from a prophet who lived among the early settlers of America. Smith gathered followers to his new faith and led them from New York, where he was born, to Ohio, then Missouri, and finally Nauvoo, Illinois. At age thirty-eight he was murdered in Carthage, Illinois, because of the hostility to his faith among neighbors in the surrounding towns and the fact that some Mormons, including Smith, practiced polygamy. Brigham Young then assumed leadership of the Mormon community and moved it to a desert region near the Great Salt Lake in Utah, where the church flourished and steadily grew in wealth and number. Over the past 150 years it has spread around the world because of the missionary efforts of its young people. By the middle of the twenty-first century membership in the

church is expected to exceed fifty million and will rank among the top five Christian denominations in the United States.

The Shaker and Mormon phenomena was one expression of a remarkable outburst of religious frenzy that swept across much of the country in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. This was the Second Great Awakening; and it is one of the most important reasons for the reforming zeal of the Jacksonian era. It influenced almost every aspect of American thought and activity. It was the beginning of an evangelical movement that started with a series of revival meetings at the turn of the nineteenth century and reached its zenith in the 1820s and 1830s. Itinerant preachers who had little formal theological education but mesmerizing theatrical talents summoned worshippers to repent their sins and reform their lives. Their words, their own deep commitment, and their physical involvement resulted in emotional orgies, with men and women tearing their hair, beating their breasts, rolling on the ground, begging God's forgiveness, publicly confessing their sins, and promising to devote themselves to doing good and improving society.

It is no surprise that many of the reforms during the Jacksonian age were initiated and advanced by religious leaders. They called on their followers to band together and establish organizations to improve society and ameliorate human suffering. Charles Grandison Finney was the most prominent preacher of his day and the originator of modern evangelical Protestantism in America. "The evils have been exhibited," preached Finney, "the call has been made for reform. . . . Away with the idea that Christians can remain neutral and keep still, and yet enjoy the approbation and blessing of God." So men and women like Horace Mann, Dorothea L. Dix, Frances Wright, Neal Dow, Lucretia Mott, William Ladd, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, along with many others, responded to these pleas and set about improving penal institutions and insane asylums, ending slavery, providing equal rights and better education for women, promoting temperance, assisting the poor, advocating better working conditions, and fostering peace around the world. Horace Mann shared his creed with the graduating class of Antioch College in Ohio just a few weeks before his death. "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity," he said.

The improvement in public education to which Mann devoted his life also stimulated the improvement of textbooks. Virtually all the early manuals were of poor quality, and not until Noah Webster introduced his *Spelling Book* and *Reader* did education improve substantially. In 1836 William H. McGuffey's *Eclectic Reader* was published and had an immediate and tremendous impact on elementary school instruction. The book emphasized cultural and moral standards and preached a patriotism that exactly fitted the country's growing sense of nationalism. There is little doubt that McGuffey had a greater influence on American life than any other writer or politician of the age.

How did this happen? What could have brought on this strange and wonderful phenomenon, this Age of Reform, this Second Great Awakening? As with most important events in history, there are a number of reasons. For one, Americans were in the midst of a series of enormous changes, and the changes came with a staggering number of sudden jolts to the body politic. It has been argued that the United States changed more profoundly during the thirty years from 1790 to 1820 than during any other period in its entire history. It should be remembered that Americans had just concluded a Revolution in which they cast off monarchical rule and established a republican government. Then, in the midst of their "experiment in freedom" under the Constitution, political parties formed to run the government. But the experiment elicited contempt from European powers, and ultimately resulted in a war with England. Only the incredible victory at New Orleans by General Jackson and his troops spared the United States from utter humiliation.

Additional changes followed the war. The industrial revolution began and would eventually convert the nation from an agricultural to an industrial society. It was followed by a Transportation Revolution in which communication between sections and regions advanced the expansion of the nation. Most profoundly, the evolution from a republican government to a democratic government brought a new and different generation of leaders into power. Washington, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison had been replaced by Old Hickory, the Little Magician, Tippecanoe, Young Hickory, and Old Rough and Ready. Small wonder, then, that Americans who were caught up in these many changes turned to religion to find stability and

purpose in life and meaningful activities that could reform society and make it better.

THIS GENERATION OF romanticists also produced a flowering of a national literature. A large number of creative artists flourished during the Jacksonian era. Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, experienced the ideas of Transcendentalism while living in Concord, Massachusetts, and conveyed them in *Twice-Told Tales* and his novels *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. Henry Thoreau, a close friend of Emerson's and another prominent Transcendentalist, spent two years at Walden Pond before producing his masterpiece, *Walden*, which expressed his philosophical, religious, and economic views and the joy of living close to nature. "I went to the woods," he wrote, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." He refused to pay a Massachusetts tax to support a war and preferred to go to jail rather than allow a sovereign state to coerce his free will. He wrote the vastly important "Civil Disobedience," a work that had an enormous influence on Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Probably the most gifted writer of this generation was Herman Melville, whose monumental novel *Moby-Dick* grappled with the problem of man's eternal struggle with evil. He even included in this work a tribute to Andrew Jackson and the democracy that bore his name:

If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities . . . then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God! . . . Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles, who didst hurl him upon a warhorse, who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all Thy mighty earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons, bear me out in it, O God.

No one writer epitomized romanticism in his works more than Edgar Allan Poe, who created the detective novel in such books as *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Purloined Letter*. His poetry, "The Raven," "The Bells," and "Annabel Lee"; his short stories, such as "The Gold Bug" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," proved him to be a singularly inventive and exciting writer. Other poets of the Jacksonian age include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Longfellow romanticized Indians, Lowell satirized the Mexican War, and Whittier attacked slavery. But the outstanding poetic genius of the antebellum era was Walt Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass* emphasized the Transcendental themes of man's goodness and the beauty of nature. His work is a landmark of American literature.

Although the South did not produce literary masterpieces comparable to those from the North, several southern writers produced works of more than common interest and value. William Gilmore Simms wrote a number of romantic novels about the old South, such as *The Yemassee* and *The Partisan*. Both Augustus B. Longstreet, who wrote *Georgia Scenes*; and Joseph Baldwin, who penned *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*, sought to capture the rawness and vitality of backwoods life. But as Simms so graphically said, "The South don't give a d—d for literature or art." And certainly not for genuine American literature, which described southerners' surroundings.

A different kind of artist, but a major one nonetheless, John James Audubon, produced magnificent paintings in *Birds of America*, capturing the beauty and variety of these creatures and demonstrating the lush and gorgeous background of the American forest.

Americans also showed a preference for applied scientific techniques over pure scientific theory. They were pragmatists and sought what could be useful and profitable. One foreign observer commented, "Where in Europe young men write poems or novels, in America, especially Massachusetts and Connecticut, they invent machines and tools." Indeed. During the Jacksonian era several important machines and techniques were invented, including the mechanical reaper for harvesting grain, invented by Cyrus McCormick in 1831; the revolver, a weapon developed by Samuel Colt in 1835; the vulcanization of rubber, produced by Charles Goodyear in 1839; the telegraph, the work of the

artist Samuel F. Morse in 1844; and the sewing machine, by Elias Howe in 1846; and many other discoveries of such lesser renown as the discovery of anaesthesia by William T. G. Morton, a dentist, in 1842.

A further result of this creativity was the establishment of new businesses and new markets. Americans became experts at converting inventions into marketable commodities and then selling them around the world. What happened was that these new Americans of the antebellum era possessed characteristics that set them apart from Europeans. Some of those characteristics included an intensely pragmatic outlook on life and a burning desire to get ahead and improve their position in society.

Of the many economic, religious, and social reforms that occurred during this Jacksonian period, none was more eventful than the increasingly determined demands by northerners that slavery be abolished throughout the country. After all, a free, supposedly civilized, Christian people holding slaves and profiting from the institution of slavery seemed to many a contradiction of everything the nation espoused about freedom and democracy.

There was a long tradition of opposition to slavery in the United States, especially among religious groups such as the Quakers. But as a result of the reform impetus following the War of 1812, the demand for abolition intensified. A striking example was the debate in Congress over the admission of Missouri into the Union: secession and even civil war were threatened by southerners if their "peculiar institution" was jeopardized in any way. A series of compromises spared the Union a possible breakup. But they prompted Jefferson, now in retirement, to warn that the conflict was "a speck on our horizon" that might well "burst on us like a tornado." It was frightening, he said, like hearing "a fire-bell in the night."

Another frightening sound came in 1822, when Denmark Vesey, a free mulatto, led a small army of followers (whites exaggerated the number by claiming that it reached 9,000) in preparing for a general revolt to win their freedom in Charleston, South Carolina. This "servile insurrection" was brutally suppressed by five companies of the South Carolina militia, and some thirty-five slaves were hanged and another thirty-seven were banished from the state. But the fear of future insurrections lingered in the minds of southerners. They convinced

themselves that blacks would rise up one day and indiscriminately murder whites, just as blacks on the island of Santo Domingo in the Caribbean had done a short while before. "Let this never be forgotten," warned one man, "that our NEGROES . . . are the *anarchists* and the *domestic enemy*; the *common enemy of civilized society*, and the barbarians who would, IF THEY COULD, become the DESTROYERS of our race."

An even worse incident occurred less than ten years later. Nat Turner's rebellion is undoubtedly the worst slave insurrection in American history. It probably knocked all southerners into a permanent state of fear and terror with respect to their relationship to African-Americans. Turner was driven by the horrors regularly visited on his race because of their servitude. Some say he was a religious fanatic intent on leading his people to freedom. In any event, on August 22, 1831, at a place called Jerusalem in southeast Virginia, he and about 100 slaves slaughtered sixty whites, including some women and children. They continued their murderous rampage throughout the day and virtually wiped out the entire white community.

The local constabulary rushed to the scene and began a systematic massacre of every black they could find, guilty or not. Several of these bloodthirsty avengers swore that they would kill "every black person they saw in Southampton County." Some slaves were beheaded, their heads hoisted on poles and publicly displayed. It is uncertain how many blacks were executed in this mad act of revenge, but the figure surely ran to several hundred.

The Turner Rebellion sent shock waves across the entire South. "Fear was seen in every face," reported one Southerner. And what made it worse was the growing presence of abolitionists, who demanded the outlawing of the institution or at least a decision by Congress to ban the importation of slaves into the territories. The founding in 1833 of the American Antislavery Society provided organizational structure to the movement, and the establishment of a network of stations on the "underground railroad" assisted runaway slaves in their flight to freedom. This abolitionist activity was augmented by a number of northern states that passed "personal liberty laws," forbidding state officials from assisting in the capture and return of these fugitives.

To make matters worse, race riots regularly occurred in a number of cities, including Washington. What triggered the outbreak in the capital was the attempt by an abolitionist to distribute "incendiary publications among the negroes of the district" which were "calculated to excite them to insurrection and the bloody course" that had resulted in the Turner Rebellion. The rioting in Washington went on for days and necessitated the calling out of armed troops to restore order and protect public buildings. The *National Intelligencer* commented, "We could not have believed it possible" that such violence could occur in the capital of a free people.

Neither the Whig Party nor the Democratic Party would adopt a platform calling for the abolition of slavery or the prohibition of its expansion into the territories. Democrats argued that the situation of the black man had been decided by the Constitution in a compromise that called for the counting of three-fifths of slaves in determining each state's representation in the lower house of Congress. That was the agreement. To change it by freeing the slaves would void the contract and lead to disunion. The Whigs were torn between those in the South who decried any interference in their right to hold slaves and to take them into the territories and those in the North who recognized the need to address the problem but could not agree on a single solution. Many of these northerners later drifted away from the party in the 1850s and eventually formed the Republican party.

Petitions flooded into Congress demanding that some action be taken to limit slavery. But southerners would have none of it, and on May 26, 1836, in the House of Representatives the members voted to table (in effect, to kill) any petition that related "in any way or to any extent whatsoever to the subject of slavery or the abolition of slavery." John Quincy Adams, now a member of the House, defended the "right of petition" and over the next several years fought to have this "gag resolution" rescinded. Year after year the "gag" was reimposed, until December 3, 1844, when it failed to win passage by a vote of 108 to 80. Northern members were at last responding to the increased demands of their constituents to protect the right of petition. "Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of God," pronounced Adams on finally winning this battle.

The right of petition had been sustained, but the basic problem remained: slavery. And the continuance of the Union lay in the balance.

THE WHIGS HAD triumphed in the election of 1840, and with both houses of Congress and the office of the chief executive in their control, they expected to dismantle Jackson's program, charter a new bank, and raise the tariff once the ten-year truce ended in 1843. But President William Henry Harrison died a month after his inauguration in 1841. Now John Tyler succeeded him, and Tyler reverted to his old loyalty to the Democratic Party. He not only vetoed the Whig-sponsored measures to revive the national bank and raise the tariff, but he sought the annexation of Texas, which won its independence from Mexico in 1836. This reaching out for additional territory in the west inaugurated a new concept in American thinking, one John L. O'Sullivan, editor of *The Democratic Review*, called Manifest Destiny. His essay in the *Review* stated that it is "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of our great experiment of liberty and federated self government entrusted to us."

Years earlier, Jackson had encouraged expansion. He said it was essential for American security, especially in the Southwest along the Gulf of Mexico. It was dangerous, he declared, "to leave a foreign power in possession of heads of our leading branches of the great mississippi." Expansion was "necessary for the security of the great emporium of the west, Neworleans." Besides, he went on, "the god of the universe had intended this great valley to one nation." And that nation—obviously—was the United States. Which is why he regarded the presence of the British, the Spanish, and Native Americans to be a constant threat to the safety of the American people and why he was determined to get rid of them. One by one he had defeated all of them militarily. But that was not enough. Jackson was simply repeating what he had said just before the War of 1812: that he sought the acquisition by the United States of "all Spanish North America."

Manifest Destiny quickly captured the imagination of the American people and their government, and it is small wonder that when Tyler proposed a joint resolution of both houses of Congress (an earlier

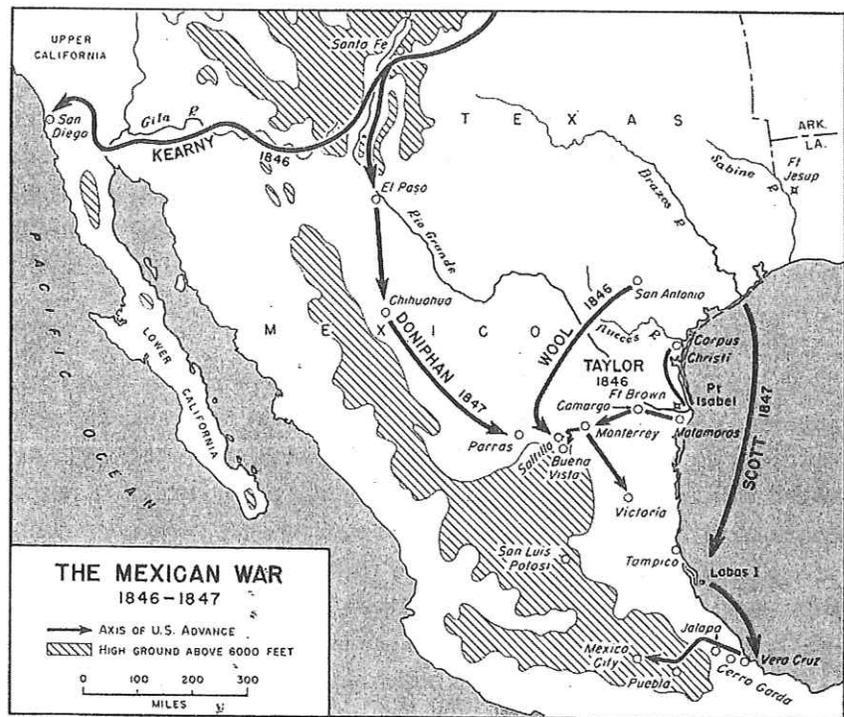
attempt at a treaty of annexation, which required a two-thirds vote, was defeated in the Senate) that required only a majority vote from each house, it passed. The President signed it on March 1, 1845, a few days before he was succeeded by James Knox Polk, who had defeated Henry Clay in 1844 in a very close presidential election. Texas ratified the annexation on July 4, 1845, and was admitted as a slave state on December 29, 1845.

But Polk, a protégé of Andrew Jackson, was not satisfied with Texas. Like Jackson, he lusted after "all Spanish North America." In particular he wanted California, with its incomparable seaports fronting the Pacific Ocean and the possibility of an expanded trade with the Orient. During the presidential campaign of 1844, the Democrats not only demanded all of Texas to the Rio Grande but raised the cry of "54°40' or Fight," by which they meant the reoccupation of Oregon—that is, all the territory of the extreme northwest, right up to the border of Russian Alaska. The area in dispute—roughly from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and from the northern border of California to 54°40'—was jointly occupied by Britain and the United States. Polk's victory over Clay encouraged Tyler to move forward on Texas, but he made no move toward the Oregon country. When Polk succeeded to the presidency, he was more concerned about acquiring California and the area west of Texas than challenging Great Britain over Oregon, so he readily agreed to establish the 49th parallel as the border separating Canada and the United States. A treaty was speedily arranged with Great Britain on June 15, 1846, and the Senate hastily ratified it.

Mexico regarded the annexation of Texas as a clear indication of the United States' ever-expanding lust for additional territory, and it insisted that the Nueces River, not the Rio Grande, separated the two countries. Furthermore, Mexico rejected offers by the United States to buy California. Whereupon Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor, commander of about 3,500 troops stationed on the Nueces River, to advance to the Rio Grande, a sort of no-man's-land between the United States and Mexico. This action virtually invited a Mexican attack, which not surprisingly occurred on April 25, 1846, when a detachment of Mexican troops crossed into the "no-man's-land," ambushed an American scouting party of sixty-three soldiers, killed sixteen of them, and captured the others.

When word of this engagement reached Washington, Polk immediately prepared a war message. He told Congress that Mexico had "shed American blood on American soil," and he asked the House and Senate to "recognize the existence of war" between the two countries. A bill appropriating \$10 million and authorizing the President to call for 50,000 volunteers prompted the protests of Whig congressmen, who claimed they were being asked to vote on providing volunteers before war had been declared, an act of outright aggression. To resolve the problem the administration's leaders in Congress attached a preamble to the bill stating that war already existed by virtue of the invasion of Texas by Mexico. The measure passed and the President signed it on May 13, 1846.

The war itself provided one military victory after another for the United States. General Taylor defeated a superior force of Mexicans at Buena Vista in February 1847; and General Winfield Scott led an expe-



Military operations during the Mexican War

dition that landed at Vera Cruz and swept inland to Mexico City. On September 14, 1847, American troops captured the capital and Scott accepted its formal surrender by the city council. Meanwhile John C. Frémont, captain of an engineering corps, arrived on an exploring expedition in California and upon hearing that the United States had declared war against Mexico helped a band of frontiersmen proclaim the independence of California. At first they set up the Bear Flag Republic, but then they raised the Stars and Stripes.

At about the same time Colonel Stephen W. Kearny, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, was ordered to invade New Mexico. He arrived at Santa Fe in August, forced the retreat of a Mexican force that was more than twice the size of his own army, and proclaimed New Mexico a territory of the United States. He then proceeded west, where he joined Frémont and completed the conquest of California.

In an effort to end the war as quickly as possible, Polk dispatched a clerk in the State Department, Nicholas Trist, to Mexico as his peace commissioner. Trist succeeded in producing the Treaty of Guadalupe



Continental expansion of the United States

Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, and the Senate ratified it on March 10 by a vote of 38 to 14. By the treaty the United States received title to over 500,000 square miles of territory, including the present states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona; the western slope of Colorado; and a corner of Wyoming. Mexico also recognized the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas. In return, the United States paid Mexico \$15 million plus \$3.25 million in assumed claims by its citizens against Mexico. American casualties in the war came to 1,721 from combat, and 11,550 from disease. Both Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, who had opposed the war, lost sons in the conflict. Mexican casualties amounted to 50,000.

Manifest Destiny had brought the nation to a new era in its history, one that generated pride in what had been accomplished, especially the acquisition of a territorial empire. But the consequences of the Mexican War also brought a series of crises during the next decade that ended in secession and civil war.