

8

God bless America

DOMINATION

INFLUENCE

OPPOSITION

RÉVOLTE



1. Founding New England

1. Before reading the text, describe the cartoon briefly (time, place, characters...).
2. Read the text, then link the cartoon and the text.

The *Mayflower*, coming from Plymouth, England, reached the coast of Massachusetts in November 1620. There the 102 passengers, known as the Pilgrim¹ Fathers, founded *Plimoth*⁵ *Plantation*. They had refused to submit to the Anglican Church and wanted to establish a separate church based on one principle: self-government.

- Those early pioneers were soon followed by
- 10 Puritans who were persecuted in England. In their enthusiasm to keep their religion pure, the Puritans were extremely severe in their punishment of anyone who would oppose them. They dressed in dark clothes with no fashionable decorations, colourful clothing being an indication of “the devil at work”.
 - 15 In spite of their intolerance, they had a great impact on American civilisation because of their “faith² in God, faith in man, faith in work”.

1. pèlerin – 2. foi



messy: désordonné – straighten out: mettre de l'ordre

Reproduction by Special Permission of PLAYBOY Magazine © 1983 by PLAYBOY

2. A God-fearing country



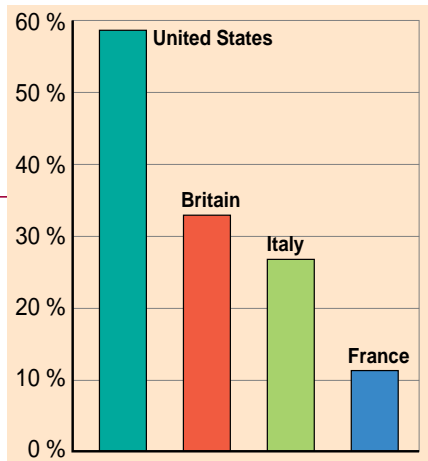
There is no established church in the USA, no formal link between church and state, but American religious institutions are large, powerful and influential in social and political life.

America is a God-fearing country. Even Americans who are members of no established religion are likely to believe in God. According to a Gallup opinion survey, 98% of Americans believe in God.

1. Guess where the photo was taken.
2. What is associated with religion here? What impression does it convey?
3. Find a French equivalent of the adjective *God-fearing*.

3. Facts and figures

Observe the graph before reading the text. How do you react to the various percentages?



1. 180 million Americans (65%) identify themselves as affiliated with a specific denomination (religious group).

2. Members of American Protestant churches total about 100 million people, spread across some 200 denominations (Southern Baptist Convention: 16m – United Methodist Church: 8m – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 5m).

3. Roman Catholics are the single largest denomination with some 65 million believers.

4. The USA has some 5 million religiously identified or affiliated Jews.

5. There are an estimated 3 million Muslims.

6. Atheists / agnostics number about 10 million.

7. In any given week, more Americans will attend religious events than professional sporting events.

8. The motto *In God We Trust* is written on all American banknotes and on most coins.



4. Politics and religion

“America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and **we** stand together to win the war against terrorism. Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children **5** whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray **they** will be comforted by a power greater than any of **us**, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no **10** evil, for **You** are with **me**.’ Thank **you**. Good night and God bless America.”

President George W. Bush, *Address to the Nation*, September 11, 2001



1. Who do the words in bold letters refer to?
2. Who is that “power greater than any of us”?
3. Could a French president deliver such a speech? Why or why not?
4. In the picture, compare the gesture President Bush makes with his right hand and the one Jesus makes with his left hand. What are they both trying to do?

5. The preacher

1. The man on the screens is Billy Graham, who, for forty years, was the most famous preacher in Protestant America and the spiritual guide of many US presidents. Describe the photo and give your impressions.
2. Read the text and find the equivalents of the following expressions and words (in the right order):
au-delà du faisceau de lumière
– lever les bras au ciel –
parcourir comme une vague –
seau – allée – boniment –
quête.
3. What is more important for Rex Humbard, the crowd or the television camera? Justify.
4. Why is Rex Humbard said to be a “traveling evangelist” (l. 12)? Explain what “his cause” (l. 14) is.
5. Pick out the sentence which Rex Humbard means to be funny. In your opinion, is it funny?
6. What do you think of preachers like Rex Humbard?



Radio and television broadcasting have become major elements of contemporary American religion, enabling even minor denominations to establish their electronic presence and collect huge sums of money.

The man of God stood in the center of the spotlight and gazed beyond its beam, beyond the faces of the five thousand people who filled the stadium, straight into the eye of the television camera. He flung out his arms in a gesture of supplication, even crucifixion. “How many of you expect me to ask for money?” There was a pause. Hands began to show among the audience, many hands. “I... will... not... disappoint... you,” he intoned slowly. He smiled at the laughter that rippled through the crowd. And as his small army of servitors, in red blazers, appeared – as though by magic – with the white plastic buckets in the aisles, he moved into the next stage of his sales pitch.

Rex Humbard, traveling evangelist, man of God, son of a preacher, was doing – once again – what he does most naturally and best of all; gathering souls for God and money for his cause.

“I’ll tell you what I’d like to do.” He managed a confidential manner in front of his huge audience. “I want to make this a one-hundred-percent occasion. I want *everybody* here to help me make it a one-hundred-percent occasion. You may think it will cost you to say you will help – but it won’t cost you in quite the way you think. You see, I want everybody here to say to me: ‘Rex, when you take up that collection I’ll give the best gift I can.’ Now what is the best gift? Some of you might be able to write a sizable check, some of you might be able to give a ten – or twenty – dollar bill, some of you might only give a dollar, some may only give a coin. And there may be somebody here tonight who has not one penny. Well, I want to say to that person: ‘You are so welcome in this meeting and we are praying that God will provide for you. But you can give too – you can give prayer. If that’s your best gift, prayer will do.’ ”

Desmond WILCOX, *Rex Humbard, Preacher*, in *Americans* (1978)