

Ch. 11 - **RELIGION, THE MASS MEDIA AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Learning Intentions

In this section, you should understand:

- The role of religion in modern American culture.
- The role of Billy Graham.
- The mass media - newspapers, movies and television.
- The expansion of mass higher education.

RELIGION IN MODERN AMERICAN CULTURE

Post-war Revival

In the US, the drift away from **organised religion** in pre-war days was reversed after the Second World War. Church membership soared in the 1950s, there was increased money spent on church buildings and religious leaders grew in respect.

The influence of religion could be seen at all levels in US life. In the **movies**, for example, *The Ten Commandments* broke box-office records. Semi-religious **songs** became hits. The **Pledge of Allegiance** recited every day by children in school included the words 'under God'. In the 1950s, the words '*In God We Trust*' were added to the currency. In 1954, Time magazine said that the Christian faith was '*back at the centre of things.*'

Causes of Revival

Cold War tensions helped the rise in religious feelings. Religious leaders said that Communism was a '*great sinister anti-Christian movement*'. Some Americans viewed their foreign policy in **moralistic** terms (right versus wrong). They believed in the rightness of their cause and the evil of Communism, which they saw as godless. They believed it was the God-given duty of Americans to spread the blessings of democracy. More cynical observers said, however, that in the era of McCarthyism and the Red Scare, being an active church member was a good way to avoid being branded a subversive.

But there were **other reasons** for the growth in church membership. It was partly due to the need for Americans to **belong** in such a rapidly changing society as the 1950s and 1960s, and the churches provided **stability**. To help them get their message across, the churches made use of modern technology - especially radio and television.

Evangelical Preachers

One factor which appealed to many in the 1950s was the simplified gospel message of **evangelical preachers**. One of the most influential was **Billy Graham**, a North Carolina Baptist whose **crusades** attracted large audiences. Billy Graham began in a one-room office with a secretary in 1950. By 1958, he had 200 working out of a four-storey office building. He also had a weekly television show and Presidents liked to meet and be photographed with him. Another evangelist, **Oral Roberts**, owned a large ranch, a private plane, a TV and radio show, a university called in his name and he collected \$50 million a year.

The preachers used **radio and television** (there were 1,200 religious radio stations and 36 religious television stations), **mass mailings** and **advertising language and methods** to preach against the materialism of American life. In this way their appeal was particularly widespread among **poorer Americans** who did not share the affluence of the middle class.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was there a religious revival in the US after the Second World War?
2. How did evangelical preachers get their message across?

KEY PERSONALITY: BILLY GRAHAM

Billy Graham was born in North Carolina and educated at Bob Jones University, the Florida Bible Institute and Wheaton College. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1939.

After a very successful mission in Los Angeles in 1949, he set up the **Billy Graham Evangelistic Association** in 1950. He was a powerful and dynamic preacher supported by an efficient organisation. He used advertising and publicity campaigns and a staff of specialists (including prayer leaders, singers and counsellors). He developed religion as a form of mass popular entertainment.

He preached to over 200 million people in 185 countries. In New York in 1957, his 16-week crusade (or mission) was attended by 2 million people. Time magazine called him the **Pope of Protestant America**.

Graham preached an **Evangelical Protestantism** which emphasised personal commitment to Christ, the authority of the Bible, and the literal truth of the Bible. He differed from more conservative **Fundamentalists** of the Christian Right. He said, *'I don't think Jesus or the Apostles took sides in the political arenas of their day.'*

Graham depended not only on large public meetings or crusades. He also used the **mass media** to get across his message:

- The *Hour of Decision*, a radio programme, was broadcast weekly.
- Television crusades began in 1957.
- A newspaper column was published by papers across America.

KEY PERSONALITY: BILLY GRAHAM

Graham also wrote 25 books, including *Peace with God*, *The Jesus Generation* and *How to Be Born Again*.

Graham's influence and reputation were so strong that many **Presidents** consulted him, from Eisenhower and Kennedy to Johnson, Nixon and Ford. He began in the 1950s as a strong **anti-Communist** and an admirer of Senator Joe McCarthy. *'I thank God for men who.. go loyally on in their work of exposing the pinks, the lavenders and the reds [Communists].'* But by the 1980s he had moved with the times and instead he now advocated **world peace** and **reconciliation** (understanding) with Soviet Russia and Communist China.

After 1978, he was allowed to preach behind the Iron Curtain in Communist-controlled Eastern Europe.

In 1953, Graham took down the ropes that separated blacks and whites at one of his crusades in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He **opposed segregation** and invited Martin Luther King on the stage at his New York Crusade (1957). Graham disagreed with the **Religious Right** in the late 1970s, saying, *'be wary of exercising political influence'*, because they might lose their religious impact.

Graham received many honours, including the **Congressional Gold Medal** (1996), which was also presented to his wife, Ruth, for *'outstanding and lasting contributions to morality, racial equality, family, philanthropy [charity] and religion'*. Unlike some other preachers, no financial or sex scandals were associated with Graham. Instead he represented the **strong religious tradition** of the US.

EXAM QUESTION

In what ways did Billy Graham represent religion in modern American culture? (2012)

Changes

After 1960, there was a **change** in the balance of religious membership. Protestant membership rose from 52 million in 1950 to 68 million in 1980, but membership changed between the different Protestant religions. In numbers, Methodists were overtaken by Baptists, while the Lutherans overtook Presbyterians. Catholic membership also grew faster, from 29 million to 50 million, partly helped by the increase in **immigration** from Latin America.

There were other changes. In the 1960s, **churchgoing** fell from its peak but it was still high. In 1970, over 60 per cent of Americans were still active church members. This compared to 10-15 per cent in England and France.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did religious membership change in the 1960s?
2. How significant was churchgoing?

Catholic Church

The US had the **largest national grouping of Catholics**. In response to this, the number of **US cardinals** grew from four in 1946 to 11 in 1980. There was also the growth of Catholic education and cultural institutions. But the Catholic Church faced difficulties in the 1960s. There was a general acceptance of the changes proposed by **Vatican II**. But there was **resistance** among US Catholics to Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, banning artificial methods of birth control. Partly as a result of that, between 1966 and 1969, the Catholic Church lost 14,000 nuns and there was a 30 per cent reduction in those studying for the priesthood. However, the Catholic Church had its own revival movement with the growth of the Catholic **Pentecostals** and the youthful **Jesus Movement**.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What changes occurred in the Catholic Church in the US?
2. How would you describe relations between different religions?

Relations between Religions

But relations between the religions were not good; anti-Catholic feeling was still strong in the 1940s and the Jews also felt resentment against themselves. There was **little religious intermarriage**. Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of Protestants married Protestants, similarly for Catholics and Jews. The differences continued between religions in the 1960s. Even though the religious distinction in marriage began to break down, there was no spirit of ecumenism. Catholics maintained their beliefs and anti-Catholic feeling was still present - a former President of Harvard University, one of America's most prestigious universities, called Catholics undemocratic.

Fundamentalists

The tradition of the evangelical preachers was continued in later decades by the fundamentalists of the 1970s and 1980s. They believed in a **strict reading** of the Bible.

They were super-patriotic and reactionary (very conservative) in politics. Their leaders were white, upper and middle class while many of their followers were poor working class who wanted clear and simple answers.

Christian fundamentalists were the **backbone** of the conservative movement in the US - the **Religious Right** - in the late 1970s and the 1980s. They were a sizeable group in society in 1977, 70 million Americans described themselves as '*born-again Christians*'. One of the best-selling books of the 1970s was Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which described the return of Jesus to Earth to save mankind.

Christian fundamentalists were angered by **Supreme Court** rulings in favour of abortion, and also by the teaching of evolution and influences against prayer in public schools. They felt they had to become more **active in politics** to protect their religion and shape society according to their religious views. They brought a religious tone and influence to politics.

KEY CONCEPT: FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism was a conservative religious movement among Protestants in the US which emphasised the strict truth of the Bible, the virgin birth, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Second Coming of Christ. Fundamentalism was particularly influential in the southern states of the US. Fundamentalists became actively involved in politics.

KEY CONCEPT: THE MORAL MAJORITY

The Moral Majority were those people who supported the application of strict or severe Christian standards of behaviour to society.

The Moral Majority

Jerry Falwell, an evangelical minister, organised the **Moral Majority** in 1979 *'to bring about a conservative revolution.'* The Moral Majority was particularly influential among southern Baptists. At a time when overall church membership was declining, the number of southern Baptists increased by 30 per cent. They used television to get their message across. In 1978, 25 channels broadcast religion on television. By 1989, this had increased to over 300.

The Moral Majority campaigned against abortion, divorce, homosexuality, federal involvement in education and the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment). This movement and the **Christian Coalition** (led by Pat Robertson) were especially influential in the **Republican Party**, where they worked to change it into a party of *'traditional family values'*. They were particularly influential during the Republican presidency of **Ronald Reagan**. In 1988, Pat Robertson became the first major religious leader in US history to campaign for a party presidential nomination, even though he failed to get it.

However, the Christian fundamentalists showed signs of **bigotry**, particularly anti-Semitism. *'With all due respect to these dear people, God does not hear the prayer of a Jew,'* said one leader. Some blamed all America's troubles on a Jewish conspiracy. This anti- Semitism, along with financial and sex scandals, undermined some of the fundamentalist leadership by the early 1990s.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who were the fundamentalists?
2. How did they become more involved in politics?
3. What was the Moral Majority and what did they campaign against?
4. How did they influence the Republican Party?
5. Why was the Moral Majority accused of bigotry?

Black Communities

Religion played an important part in the lives of black communities. **Baptism** and **Methodism** were especially influential in the rural South. Religious leaders and church buildings were important in the **social life** of the community. The civil rights movement was spearheaded by religious leaders such as **Martin Luther King** and **Ralph Abernathy**. When many blacks migrated to northern and southern cities, so did their churches. In the huge change in social life from rural to urban, from agriculture to industry, religion provided a constant source of **stability**, in church buildings which were often small and intimate.

The **Islamic tradition** also developed among the black community in northern cities. The **Black Muslims (Nation of Islam)** grew from about 1,000 members in 1946 to about 100,000 members in 1960. They rejected the term **Negro** (they said it was a slave term) for black. They enforced strict rules of behaviour and called for separate black development. Their most outstanding spokesman in the 1960s was **Malcolm X**. But they attracted high-profile members such as **Muhammed Ali**, the world heavyweight boxing champion, and their message spread well beyond their own members. When Malcolm X split with the leadership of the Black Muslims in 1965, he was assassinated. In spite of this crisis, Black Muslims still appealed to sizeable numbers of blacks.

The Mass Media IN MODERN AMERICAN *Culture*

The United States and the World, 1945 - 1989

 @MsDoorley

The Mass Media in Modern American Culture

The spread of many aspects of modern American culture was dependent on the mass media which itself was an integral part of that culture. **Newspapers** and **movies** continued as important elements of the mass media, but the new medium, **television**, became the dominant aspect of the mass media.

KEY CONCEPT: MASS MEDIA

Mass Media is a medium of communication (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) which reaches a large audience or the mass of the people.

Newspapers

Newspaper circulation expanded rapidly in the decades before the Second World War. But in the second half of the twentieth century the coming of television influenced both their **content** and **circulation**. Americans turned more to television for their daily news, so newspapers had to change. There was a greater concentration of ownership as some newspapers were bought out. The number of US cities with more than one daily newspaper dropped. By 1960, over 80 per cent of cities had only one daily newspaper. As a result, the number of newspapers in the country also dropped to about 1,500. While the daily circulation of newspapers remained steady, the population rose by 90 per cent, so that a smaller proportion of people bought newspapers.

Newspaper Influence

Nevertheless, the influence of newspapers remained strong. Newspaper **investigations** played an important role in monitoring government policy. The New York Times broke the story of the Pentagon Papers, which revealed the deceit of American foreign policy in relation to Vietnam. Some years later, Woodward and Bernstein, two journalists working for the Washington Post, revealed the corruption at the centre of the Nixon Administration and the conspiracy over the Watergate Affair. The impact of these revelations was to roll back the powers that **presidents** (the imperial presidency) had accumulated over the previous 40 years.

There was no **national daily newspaper** in the US until the 1980s due to the vast size of the country and the different time zones. But early in the decade, USA Today, the first daily national newspaper, was published. Its style of short articles and colour made it a success. It was soon followed by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* with national editions of their own newspapers using satellite transmission and regional printing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the popularity of television change the content and circulation of newspapers?
2. What influence did newspapers still have?

Movies

Movies too declined in post-war America. This was partly caused by the **movement of population** from the city centres (where cinemas were located) to the suburbs. But it was also caused by the rise of **television**.

The film industry, largely based in Hollywood (Los Angeles), responded by building drive-ins, using wide screens, 3-D and stereo sound. The film industry also responded to changes in popular culture. As a commercial operation, it needed to satisfy the mass market. Therefore, new productions were aimed at the popular taste.

Westerns were popular, as were **Cold War** stories. So too were spectacular shows such as *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*. These reinforced popular images of brave men, gentle women and the evils of Communism. However, some films broke with general consensus, such as the anti-war movie *Paths of Glory*, or *Rebel without a Cause*, which highlighted rebellious youth..

Movies

But these failed to reverse the decline. However, these figures underestimate the influence and role of movies in modern American culture. From the 1950s, many movies (films) were rerun on television and some were made for television only. By the 1970s and 1980s, videos and pay TV channels such as **Home Box Office (HBO)** widened the audience and the influence of films.

During this time, Hollywood maintained a **code of conduct** in relation to portraying sex or violence on screens. This was not relaxed or eased until 1966, after which films became more obscene, violent and sexual to reflect the more turbulent 60s. *Bonnie and Clyde*, which featured a couple of young robbers on the run from the law, and *The Wild Bunch* were early examples which reflected the changes. The 1970s saw the appearance of many young directors, such as **Francis Ford Coppola**, whose *Godfather* series told the story of a Mafia family. These directors followed the pattern of **realistic portrayals** of life. But there were also **action movies**, such as *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which harked back to the earlier decades of the cinema. Very often some of the best movies were directed by **independent directors** outside the Hollywood studio system which controlled the film industry. This, along with new suburban cineplexes (multiple-cinema complexes), helped to attract a growing younger audience back to the cinema.

Television

Television grew **rapidly**. In 1948, fewer than 200,000 families had televisions. But this boomed in the next few years to 15 million by 1952 and 35 million in 75 per cent of homes by 1955. By 1960, 90 per cent of homes had televisions. Colour took over in the 1960s. It was not until the late 1970s that **cable** began to spread - only 12 per cent of homes had cable in 1974, but by 1990 about 70 per cent had cable television.

The use of **satellite transmissions**, beginning with Telstar and Early Bird in the 1960s, made national live broadcasts possible. Their link-up with cable TV gave rise to new channels geared to specific **mass audiences**, such as **MTV** (Music Television) and **CNN** (Cable News Network), which both began in 1981. But some feared that the effect of the wider range of channels specialising in religion, sport and business might lead to a **splintering of society** and reduce the overall national feeling of identity. However, as others pointed out, there was also the likelihood of **oversaturation**. As pop star Bruce Springsteen sang:

*'I can see by your eyes friend you're just about gone
Fifty-seven channels and nothin' on...'*

Television and Family Life

Television became the centre of the **family life**, influencing the time of meals, sometimes even what was eaten in the form of TV dinners. Television provided many hours of **leisure** - some said too much because it produced a **lazy lifestyle**. To cater for **mass audiences**, television went for general interest programmes, variety entertainment, quiz shows, sitcoms and talk shows. Some criticised the **mindlessness** of these programmes. Even before television became very popular, the President of Boston University said in 1950, *'If the television rage continues.. we are destined to have a nation of morons.'*

Television affected other aspects of **American life**. Along with movies it reinforced the **image** of the white, suburban, middle-class family. In this way it also reflected the woman's role as a housewife. *'A career is just fine,'* said Debbie Reynolds in *The Tender Trap*, *'but it is no substitute for marriage.'* Television also increased the value and attractiveness of **advertising** and in this way contributed to the growing consumer society. The advertisers *'had a more potent force available for selling purposes. Radio was abandoned like the bones at a barbecue.'*

Television and Family Life

Since television depended largely on **sponsorship**, the advertisers had a huge influence on what was shown on television. One of the most influential and provocative current affairs programmes of the early 1950s was changed to an occasional documentary before it was dropped when the sponsoring company withdrew its support.

Televised **sport** was ideal for the mass audiences. Television money paid for more **professionalism** in sport, especially by the 1970s and 1980s, when multi-million-dollar contracts became normal. But it also dictated breaks in sport to cater for advertising. It also raised the profile of black and Hispanic sports stars, such as **Michael Jordan** in basketball and **Muhammed Ali** in boxing. In its entertainment programmes, it had to change gradually to reflect the **racial mix of society** by moving from blacks as servants and slaves to portraying them with a fuller role in society.

Television and Politics

Television also influenced **politics** by shaping **public opinion**. It contributed to the downfall of **Senator Joe McCarthy** when his bullying style was shown up badly by live television broadcasts at the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954. Television also influenced the outcome of **presidential elections**, particularly the very close 1960 race between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Kennedy's performance on the first live television presidential debates and his youthful image helped to give him a narrow victory. It influenced politics in another way. By increasing the **costs of campaigning**, it opened politicians to charges of influence when they got money from businesses to cover their costs. Television could not deal with more complicated problems, so it tended to **simplify issues**. In this way advertisers and political consultants emphasised the importance of **sound bites** - short, snappy comments which caught attention - rather than serious discussion.

KEY CONCEPT: PUBLIC OPINION

The views and attitudes of the people. This is measured in elections or in between elections in opinion polls. In a democracy, political parties have to get elected so they have to pay attention to public opinion.

Television and Politics

Television had a large influence on the progress of the **civil rights movement**. It exposed to national and international audiences police efforts to prevent school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, **Bull Connor** and his police force's brutal treatment of black protestors in Birmingham, Alabama and the police violence against the Selma-Montgomery marchers. It brought **Martin Luther King** to national prominence as a black spokesman. In this way television encouraged northern liberal white support for civil rights and it provoked government action.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Americans watched the first **living room war** as they saw action from Vietnam. But producers at NBC, ABC and CBS cut out **bloody incidents** from evening news broadcasts. This helped shield the public from the horrors of war. For the most part television gave the **government's version** of the war - that America was winning - until the Tet Offensive in early 1968. After this, television played an important role in the growth of anti-war opinion. Just like the newspapers, television felt betrayed by government misinformation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How rapidly did television grow?
2. What changes occurred to television broadcasting in the 1960s and 19700s?
3. What influence did TV have on family life?
4. What role did sport play in television?
5. How did TV influence:
 - a. Politics
 - b. Civil rights campaign
 - c. The Vietnam War

Mass **HIGHER** *Education*

Expansion of Higher Education

There was a **huge interest** in education in post-war America. Dozens of books on education and educational articles were published. This reflected parents' higher aspirations for their children. A more complex and technical world also demanded higher levels of education. The booming economy of the 1950s created a strong demand for college-educated students by corporations providing large salaries.

Colleges and universities faced problems of coping with the increased demand for places. Enrolment grew because of veterans attending under the **GI Bill of Rights**. It fell off slightly during the Korean War, but grew rapidly again afterwards when the post-war **baby boomers** reached college age. By the time the GI Bill was wound up in 1956, 8 million had benefited. University enrolment also grew because of the **greater prosperity** - college fees grew slower than family incomes. As well as this, full employment made part-time jobs more easily available for students who needed to fund some of their education.

Enrolment went from 1.5 million (16 per cent of the 18-21 age group) in 1945 to 7.9 million (over 40 per cent) in 1970. Of those in college in 1970, 60 per cent of whites and 75 per cent of blacks came from families with no previous experience of higher-level education. In 1970, 26 per cent of workers were college educated; this increased to 46 per cent by 1989. To cope with this increase, the **number** of colleges and universities grew - from 1,500 in 1940 to over 2,000 in 1960, and over 3,000 in 1975.

Problems

Because of the rapid increase, the **quality** of the universities and colleges varied from the high-flying ones such as **Yale** and **Harvard** to colleges which offered courses in anything. Some even accused these colleges of **dumbing down** education.

Universities also grew in **size** - 39 had over 20,000 students each in 1969. This made them more **bureaucratic** and **impersonal**. This led to conflict between the strict campus regulations about lifestyle and behaviour inherited from olden days and the youth of the 1960s, some influenced by a culture of long hair, untidy clothes, rock music, drugs and the sexual revolution.

This contributed to **mass campus uprisings** in the mid-1960s, partly spurred on by opposition to the Vietnam War and to the **draft**. The first protest - the **Free Speech Movement** at the University of California at Berkley in 1964 - was due to college attempts to restrict political activity on campus. In 1965, 25,000 students marched through Washington to protest against the Vietnam War. The **campus riots** spread over the next few years, with over 200 major university demonstrations in 1968. The climax of the demonstrations was a pitched battle between students and the Chicago police and National Guards outside the Democratic Convention being held in Chicago in late 1968.

Problems

There was also more **widespread criticism of American society**, in particular the economic system and the role of the universities as part of it. The New Left, in particular **Students for a Democratic Society** (SDS), argued that acceptance of large **research grants** from government and corporate industry posed a threat to independent scholarship. The **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (MIT), for example, was part of the military-industrial complex. Even Time magazine worried about the development. *'Is the military about to take over US science lock, stock and barrel?'*

The universities responded to these criticisms by relaxing entry requirements and changing courses to reflect changes in society, such as introducing black studies and women's studies, as well as abolishing officer training courses.

Racial Conflict

Universities also became the scene of **racial conflict**. In southern universities, blacks, like James Meredith at the University of Mississippi, had to battle to gain entry to all-white universities. In other places, some colleges and universities had **special admission policies** for blacks and other minority groups in the 1960s. This was part of the government's **affirmative action** programme which increased black enrolment. However, it also caused a white complaint of **reverse discrimination** that they were failing to gain admission to university because of special schemes for blacks, and not on the basis of merit or ability. In 1978, a white Californian student challenged his failure to get into medical school because of the admissions policy. The Supreme Court ruled in his favour, and declared that **other factors** along with ethnic and racial background had to be considered in admissions policies.

There was a **decline** in student political activity after 1973. This was due to the ending of the Vietnam War and the draft and also to worsening economic conditions, which concentrated minds on jobs. The reduction in federal support, higher costs of courses and the fact that a degree did not guarantee a good job reduced enrolments. As a result of cutbacks in colleges, some even closed.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did higher education expand in the 1950s and 1960s?
2. What problems did universities experience as they expanded?
3. What did critics say about the role of universities?
4. How universities become centres of racial conflict?