**How did religion impact the early history of the United States?**

**3 major religious groups in the U.S.**

Protestant

Catholic

Jewish

**Characteristics of American Religious Beliefs**

1.The Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution provides that there is no state religion and that church and state must be separated. (没有国教及政教分离)

2. American religious beliefs continue to be strong with social progress.

3. In the United States, every church is a completely independent organization and concerned with its own finance and its own building. There has been little concentration on doctrine or religious argument such as in European history.

**The Pervasive Influence of Religion on American Society**

Although the American government is free from religious influences, references to God are a part of many official customs and acts.

1. Influence on many official customs and acts

-- There must be a position for clergy in the American Congress.

-- Sessions of Congress and state legislatures begin with prayers.

-- Presidents take their oath of office with one of their hands on the Bible.

-- The pledge of allegiance to American flag contains the phrase “one nation under God”.

-- A member of the clergy is always following an army to the battlefield.

-- American currency proclaims “In God We Trust”.

-- Churches provide food, health care and shelters for the people in need. (social welfare) i

2. Influence on Education

-- The development of education was greatly influenced by religious teaching groups in the early stages of American history.

-- The Puritans believed that every child should be educated so that he could read the Bible. And when Harvard was founded in 1636, its primary purpose was not to train lawyers or political leaders, but to train priests.

-- Clergy used to be the presidents of famous universities in America.

3. Influence on Economy

-- Religion also contributed to the rapid growth of economy in the United States.

--Many early American businessmen were motivated by the Protestant ethic in their pursuit of wealth. Some early Protestant leaders believed that people who were blessed by God would be recognized in the world by their material success.

--This belief motivated many Protestants not only to lead highly moral lives, but also work hard, not waste time, and save and invest their money rather than spend it on immediate pleasures. This approach to life created a favorable climate for the emergence of modern capitalism.

4. Influence outside the United States

-- The influence of religion can be felt not only inside the United States, but also outside the country.

-- In the early years of the nation, American felt that they had a divine mission — Manifest Destiny to make their unique political system, economic structure, or social values a model for the world to follow.

-- This belief has constantly been employed to justify American expansionist movement in the late nineteenth century and overseas military interferences around the world after the Second World War.

**What is Protestantism and how is it represented in America?**

-- The Protestants, in general, believe that all individuals must stand alone before God. If people sinned, they should seek their forgiveness directly from God rather than from a priest speaking in God’s name.

-- Because of the differences in beliefs in the United States, Protestantism includes about 30 principal groups such as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists.

-- Baptists is the largest Protestant group in the US. The first

Baptist church was established in Rhode Island in 1639.

**The Protestant Heritage (Beliefs and Values)**

-- Self-improvement and material success

-- Protestantism has been a powerful force in shaping the values and beliefs of Americans.

-- One of the most important values associated with American Protestantism is the value of self-improvement.

-- Christianity often emphasizes the natural sinfulness of human nature.

-- The achievement of material success is the most widely respected form of self-improvement in the United States.

-- Individual freedom and self-reliance

--WASP wanted to set up free colonies.

--The Bill of Rights limits the power of the government to restrict the rights of individual religion.

-- In Americans’ view, individual freedom means the right of all individuals to control their own destiny without the outside influence from the government, the church or any other organized authority.

-- Volunteerism and charity

Definition:

Volunteerism refers to unpaid service. Helping

others is a way of self-improvement. People

contribute some of their time or money to

charity, education and religion. This philosophy

is called volunteerism.

Religious Reasons:

Christians believe that if you love God, you will

also love your neighbors.

Definition:

Charity means that individuals, organizations,

and the state should offer help to those in

need without an expectation that the favor will

be returned.

Religious Reasons:

Christians believe that charity is a religious

duty.