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American Civilization 1700

Signature Assignment

Three mentions of deity in American History reflect the past society's dream of a free country, democratic government and simple rights for its citizens. The words "In God We Trust," "Under God," and "endowed by their creator" represent the American people's belief in God's protection for the nation and the Pledge of Allegiance represents the prayer asking for God's protection.

"In God We Trust" first appeared on United States' coins in 1864 and later on paper money in the year 1957. "In God we trust" was adopted as the official motto of the United States in 1956 to replace the unofficial motto of *E pluribus unum*. In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed an official law (P.L. 84-140) declaring "In God We Trust" as the nation's official motto. The Civil War had just ended in America at the time that the phrase first appeared on American currency. The words are rumored to have been the motto of a Union military unit. Following this war, there was an increase in religious sentiment. I believe the reason for the phrase's adoption at that time was to show that God was on the Union side of the Civil War. The Union felt obligated to fight for the end of slavery and President Lincoln felt it was his duty to preserve the Union. In some opinions, the Civil War broke out because of Lincoln's presidential election based on his platform was based on anti-slavery and he won the

election without one southern state vote. In recent years, this motto on our money has been challenged in federal courts. The challenge was rejected and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review the case.

The words “Under God” became part of the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy’s “red scare” hearings caused a fear of communism in the country. McCarthyism was a major social and cultural occurrence that affected all levels of society and was the source of a great deal of debate and conflict in the United States. Many U.S. citizens, including McCarthy, were accused of being communists or supporting communism. By acknowledging God within our national system, it would protect the country from communism. The reason for the words’ adoption at that time was a way of “reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future” (Eisenhower). I think another reason for its adoption was Eisenhower’s later in life baptism and Presbyterian faith after growing up either Jehovah’s Witness or Mennonite. The Pledge became a patriotic oath as well as a public prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 by a Baptist minister, Francis Bellamy for Youth’s Companion (a national family magazine for youth). This was followed by the magazine’s campaign to sell American flags to the public schools. To promote the use of the flag, the magazine used the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ discovery of America. The pledge was first recited in public schools in October of 1892. The Pledge of Allegiance was formally adopted by the Congress as the pledge in 1942. I believe there were many contributing factors to the origination of the Pledge of Allegiance at that time. Our country’s development was at the forefront of this era. On January 1, 1892, immigrants began entering our country through Ellis Island, the automatic voting booth was invented, and the Republican National Convention began. Also, Grover Cleveland was reelected to his second

non-consecutive term because his second election he had won the popular vote. Many challenges have been reviewed in courts about the requirement of students to say the pledge in public schools. Most recently, the U.S. Supreme Court denied an appeal of Boston's Circuit Court decision that reciting the pledge does not violate students' rights. About 50% of America's schools require students to recite the pledge and some just recommend it.

Thomas Jefferson was the President of United States from 1801-1809 and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. The words, "endowed by their creator," towards the beginning of the Declaration included the word creator to mean an invisible spirit, a divine intelligence, a non-image personage, and the supreme intelligence behind all of that which is created. Jefferson and other members of the founding generation were deeply influenced by the 18th-century European intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. Enlightenment philosophy stressed that liberty and equality were natural human rights.

Colonial Americans argued that King George III and Parliament had denied them the basic rights of British citizens. Despite the prevalence of slavery in their society, the revolutionary generation wished for a new American government that secured the rights and freedoms of its citizens. However, these rights and freedoms did not immediately extend to slaves.