

## **In God We Trust, The history of our National Motto on money.**

**By: Mike Mouret, President,  
Nashville Coin & Currency, Inc.**

As a coin collector, one of the things that I always found intriguing about our nation's coins is how they tie into our history, and how a person can often observe the events of the day reflected on our nation's money.

The Civil War left an amazing footprint on our nation's history in so many ways. At no other time in the relatively short history of our Republic had such uncertainty reigned. As the news of each major battle reached the citizenry, fear and trepidation reigned supreme. Would the North take control and restore the Union? Would the South prevail and split the country? Would it disintegrate and a foreign power take control? At the height of all this uncertainty, religious sentiment was growing across the nation and a number of people began a more open call for Divine intervention. In the spring of 1864, the US Congress passed an act authorizing the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" to appear for the first time on a brand new denomination of coinage, the Two Cent Piece. Two Cent pieces were made of copper and featured a shield under a banner in which the motto appeared. The Two Cent series was short lived, only being produced for 10 years, but the public, and Congress, liked the motto appearing on coins. Thus an on-again, off-again trend was born.

From that point forward, "In God We Trust" appeared on some denominations of our coinage, but not all of them. In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt hired renown French sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens to design a new \$20 Gold coin for circulation. Roosevelt felt that having God's name on a coin was blasphemous and chose to not have the motto on this new design. St. Gaudens' design was approved and striking of the newly designed coins began in 1907. While the new design was well appreciated for its beauty, Congress soon acted to over-ride Roosevelt's decision and had the "In God We Trust" motto added to the coin. In early 1908, the coins were struck without the motto, but later in that year it was added, and it stayed as a part of the design until production of those coins ceased in 1933.

A vast majority of Americans support the invocation of God's name, and in mid-1954, the Pledge of Allegiance was modified, adding "under God". Riding this groundswell of support, the US Congress passed two laws in 1956 relating to this topic. One law declared that the motto "In God we trust" is officially our national motto. The second law mandated the use of that motto on all US coins and paper currency. It took about ten years to modify all of our coin and paper money designs, but now the motto appears on all of our money.

In 2007, a new controversy arose when the Presidential Dollar series began production and "In God We Trust" was not visible on the coin. Cries of "Atheist coins" began circulating, and the internet was abuzz with the talk. What people did not realize at the time, was that the coin's date and the motto had been moved to the edge of the coin, and you must look at the coin from the side to see it.

Who knows, maybe public outcries will once again cause our motto to be placed back into prominent visibility.