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'In God We Trust': Motto Come Lately

During the controversy about displaying the Ten Commandments in an Alabama courthouse, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy S. Moore and others have pointed to the motto "In God We Trust" as evidence that the founding fathers advocated religion.

They would do well to study U.S. history. That motto was not proposed until 1863, and it first appeared on our coinage in 1864, at a time when Alabama was at war with the United States.

Contrast this blatantly political numismatic development with our nation's original coinage, minted in Philadelphia in the 1790s under the direction of David Rittenhouse, a renowned astronomer and an ardent patriot.

Other than the date and denomination, the only words that appear on these coins are "United States of America" and "Liberty."

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