

DEUS MEUMQUE JUS = God and my Moral Rightness

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Some people debate about whether Freemasonry constitutes a "religion". Quite clearly, it is not a religion. Freemasonry is a worldwide fraternity which is composed of good men who wish to become better men. Our fraternity enables friendships to prosper by providing an environment where honorable men can associate with other like-minded men in a wholesome setting. No atheist can be a Mason because no solid anchor binds such a man to his pledge of honor. All Masons must believe in a Divine Creator. Too often, some people mince words over what constitutes the definition of "Almighty God" or a "Supreme Being" or "the Deity." That decision is left up to the individual Mason to define for himself. The Masonic Fraternity does not change or alter the definition of God in anyone's heart.

Several Masonic authors of by-gone days sometimes referred to Almighty God in the flowery oratory talk of their times. The phrase, "ToThe Glory of the Grand Architect of the Universe," was not an insult but high praise. In our current time, we might say something more concisely: "To the Glory of God" ...or "To the Glory of the Creator."

I enjoy visiting old Courthouse buildings and State Capitol buildings in various States. All sorts of people come and go, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, etc. They enter the building, conduct their business, and go home. A similar flow of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, etc., regularly enter our Masonic buildings where fraternal business is conducted, and then those men go back to their respective homes or places of abode. They are not cheapened, defiled, hypnotized or indoctrinated by the people they come in contact with. They are simply mingling with others in what we commonly refer to as American society. At various Courthouses, court proceedings may take place whereby a witness takes an Oath to tell the truth (Upon the Holy Bible or other holy book). The witness may be of one faith, but the members of a jury of various other faiths. Yet, the whole process runs smoothly because people can "get along" in harmony. Harmony is the strength & support of any well-run Institution.

Although Freemasonry is not itself a "religion," it is a fraternity that is supportive of its members having the freedom to worship their Creator as they best see fit, as individuals. In essence, Freemasonry is what other old-timers described it as: "A handmaiden of religion." That clearly shows that our fraternity helps (and not hinders) any man's personal relationship with Almighty God. One's character is strengthened when he can politely get along in life with other people who may have different customs, language or viewpoints. Freemasonry is not intended to be a spiritual "Interpreter"...that duty is best left to clergy. Freemasonry is a fraternity where signs and symbols remind a man to responsibly and peacefully measure his actions in interacting with his fellow man. Our ritual always encourages a Mason to follow the Holy Bible (or other Holy Writ) for ultimate guidance. Our religious belief system remains intact & under our own control...before, during and after Lodge meetings and ceremonies. Throughout the centuries, Masons have known that they can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other good men while retaining their own identity and sense of purpose.

Collectively, Masons of Lodges or particular Masonic Rites often champion united principles, which make them stand-out among a wide and diverse populace. We are known as Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons because the honorable ritual ceremonies we observe are ancient, yet timeless. The ceremonies and obligations within a legitimate and regular Lodge teach us important lessons in life. Masons have adopted mottos in various branches of the fraternity to be quick mental reminders of important ideals, goals, or principles. In my opinion, the various Masonic mottos are as important as road signs to a motorist or pedestrian. A



motto generally uses a phrase to succinctly summarize methods, milestones, or methods of progress. Mottos become a virtual "Landmark" -- in depicting our motivations, aspirations or nobler aspects pertaining to our personal character.

In several nations and, likewise, in several fraternal organizations, it is common to hear the three-word motto: "Liberty--Equality—Fraternity." Such a motto has been a rallying-cry among men who sought freedom, companionship, and equal treatment without prejudice. Men who are members of the various Masonic Rites are undoubtedly helped by Masonic Mottos such as the following:

Ordo ab Chao = Order out of Chaos (Used in Ancient Craft Masonry).

In Deo fiducia vinces = In the Lord is all our Trust (Used in the Premier Grand Lodge of England, year 1717).

Lapis reprobatus caput anguli = (the) stone (which was) rejected (has become) the head(stone) of the corner. [Bible...Book of Acts 4:11] (Used in the Mark Master Degree).

Kodesh Layehovah = Holiness to the Lord. [Bible..Exodus 29:30] (Used in Royal Arch Masonry).

In Hoc Signo Vinces = By this Sign thou shalt conquer. (Used in Templar Masonry).

Non Nobis, Domine, Non Nobis: Sed Nomini Tuo da Gloriam = Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give Glory. (Used in Templar Masonry).

Lux e tenebris = Light out of darkness (Used in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite)

Virtus junxit, mors non separabit = What virtue has united, death shall not separate. (Used in the 14th degree).

Ne plus ultra = Nothing more beyond. (Used in the 30th degree.) This motto initially confused me until I read Albert Pike's book, "Morals and Dogma," in which Pike rendered a drawing of the two banners which are used in the degree of Knight Kadosh. One banner had the motto: DEUS VULT = God Wills. The other banner had the motto: AUT VINCERE -AUT MORI = Either Conquer or Die. When all three mottos are compared standing together, the mission of the ancient Christian Knights during the Crusades becomes abundantly clear.

Spes Mea in Deo Est = My hope is in God. (Used in the 32°.)

Deus Meumque Jus = normally translated: "God and my right." I would not normally modify a universally accepted translation, except to clarify it as: "God and my moral Rightness." (Used in the 33°) I have seen cases in countries of Spanish origin which use SUUM CUIQUE JUS (To each his own right.) I believe that is an inferior phrase which, if interpreted too literally, would have an open-ended or too-casual a meaning which could actually open the door to all sorts of chaos (such as anarchy or atheism).

Magna est Veritas, et praevalabit = Great is truth, and it will prevail. (Used in the Order of the Red Cross).

Rex Regum et Dominus Dominorum = King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Used in the Order of Malta.) The words of that phrase form an arc or form an arch above the Maltese Cross on the Banner of the Order of Malta.

Gloria In Excelsis Deo = Glory to God in the Highest. (Used in The Royal Order of Scotland).



Virtue et silencio = By virtue and silence. (Also used in The Royal Order of Scotland).

Robur et Furor = Arabic Translation, "Kuwat wa Ghadab" = English Translation, "Strength and Fury." (Used in the Mystic Shrine.)

One other motto has the unusual capability of helping guard against what one might call "identity theft" in Masonry. Masons are accustomed to making their 'mark' upon stones; in Speculative Freemasonry. Our most distinctive personal 'mark' used nearly on a daily basis is our signature. The two words: Ne Varietur literally mean: "It shall not be varied (or altered)" alluding to a Mason's signature. The Masonic custom of requiring a Brother to immediately affix his usual signature onto his membership certificate, Patent, Brief, Diploma, Decree, Dues Card or other device is to help assure legitimacy. The reason is that it creates a sort of Credentialed "curriculum vitae" or description of the affiliations which have encompassed a man's fraternal life...denoting his degree-status or his activities to a defined level and in a defined locality. In many ways, it is the next-best-thing to a Photo I.D.

In the 1800s, Bro. Albert G. Mackey, 33° and a Knight Templar, noted that this is a precautionary measure of enabling distant Brethren, by a comparison of handwriting samples, to recognize the true and original owner of a Membership Certificate, and to detect any imposter who may surreptitiously have obtained one. Many people wonder why most Lodges have an Official Register Book at the Tyler's station just outside the entryway to the Lodge Hall. An "Official Register" is much more than a "guestbook." It enables the members and officers to literally see "WHO's WHO." It obviously helps the secretary in taking accurate 'Minutes' of the proceedings. However, it's main purpose is to provide a polite, subtle, and gentle means of obtaining a visitor's signature, residence, and stating the place where he holds his membership --thereby enabling Lodge members to fully and thoroughly examine and investigate any visitor who approaches - giving them the opportunity to make certain he is genuine. The criss-crossing requirement of the issuing Masonic Body affixing its "seal" and then the almost immediate signing by the individual member essentially creates a tangible Masonic "Passport," enabling an individual member to uniquely present and verify his own credentials as a member of a legitimate and officially recognized Masonic Body when visiting Masonic meetings in distant lands or other jurisdictions. It is both a duty and a privilege to carry one's dues card at all times. Any visitor should extend it for examination before being asked. And, anyone examining such a card should make a slow and careful inspection of it.

Each of us, as a Masonic Rosicrucian, has adopted our own unique Latin Motto as representative of our personal aims or ideals. My motto is: "Deus Lo Vult" = (God Wills It). This motto is quite ancient, having been the motto of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The motto is also as modern as the times we live in. Albert Pike quoted Saint Thomas as saying, "A thing is not just because God wills it, BUT GOD WILLS IT BECAUSE IT IS JUST."

Laws and the whole concept of justice and jurisprudence may have a 'color of law' merely by being adopted by men. Such civil laws may shift or be amended by other men from time to time. However, the higher laws of Almighty God have an inherent integrity. Obedience to the same, shapes our moral rightness. Many of our nation's founders and leading men were Freemasons. They created mottos which served as words "to live by". Many reflect the belief in inherent rights that every human is destined to possess, such as "Liberty of Conscience" or "Equal Justice under the Law." Quite notably, The Great Seal of the United States of America has three mottos beside three separate images:

The motto carried by the American Eagle: E PLURIBUS UNUM = Out of many, one.



The motto above the triangle with the All-Seeing Eye of Providence: ANNUIT COEPTIS = Providence favors our endeavors.

The motto beneath the American Pyramid: NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM = A New Order of the Ages.

By looking at these mottos (and others) a person can literally probe the depth of commitment to civilized behavior or standards. If a society is apathetic, it cares little for slogans. However, if a society strives for a degree of excellence, those attributes will be inscribed for all to see. There are no hidden agendas. There are no secret convoluted riddles. A truly honorable motto uses words as an incentive for men and women to strive harder toward excellence. In addition, any honorable motto (either implicitly or explicitly) calls upon God's aide in accomplishing worthy endeavors. Bro. and Sir Knight Robert Macoy, 33° and a K.T, in his Masonic Manual, notes the admonition given to a newly-made Knight of Malta: "You have the counsel and support of your brethren, whose mystic swords, combining the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity with Justice, Fortitude, and Mercy will leap from their scabbards in defense of your just rights..." A motto is meaningless unless it evokes sheer determination and states a goal or principle which is feasible. A worthy motto should have an eye toward success, an ear toward balance, and a mouth geared toward tolerance. Some of the most useful mottos are shared by others who share a like-minded philosophy. The mystic ties that bind us together into a fraternal band of Brothers, Fratres, and Sir Knights are largely due to the "common cause" we share. The level of mutual commitment to each other is visibly seen when we labor under the same banner, standard, or flag, which is itself emblematic of making honorable obligations and assuming solemn vows in an effort to attain cherished objectives. Our motto is a shortened adaptation of those pledges we have made. As with many honorable vows and obligations, the added supplemental phrase: "So help me God" evokes the assistance of Almighty God as a witness to and an enabler of all good things and to keep us steadfast in that endeavor.

As noted earlier, the usual translation for Deus Meumque Jus has been "God and my Right." However, in my opinion a broader translation must apply. As Americans, we may believe in the Right to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We may believe in the Right to bear Arms and other "rights." As humans, our "Right" to anything is first and foremost based on our fundamental "Right to Exist." Our existence is directly attributable to the Will of our Creator, Almighty God. Therefore, the crux of the issue is that any rights or justice we perceive are directly tied to (and flow from) moral rightness. Our sincerity toward our faith could be described as our "signature." Let us affix that signature Ne Varietur upon our hearts. By doing so, we will validate that we will walk uprightly before Almighty God in a manner which is verifiable when Saint Peter asks us to sign the Register at the door of "the Pearly Gates of Heaven".

By looking at the aforementioned mottos, let our daily actions be measured by our usual "Working Tools" as Masons; measured by our "Latin Mottos" as good citizens and Masonic Rosicrucians; signed and engraved in our hearts with the usual Ne Varietur and lastly, measured by the ultimate standard which determines if we will indeed receive the keys to the Heavenly Kingdom: OUR FAITH combined with the SINCERITY OF THAT FAITH in reflecting what our moral rightness actually is. My own feeling is that it will literally hinge on my mind, my body and my soul living-up to the motto: God and my Moral Rightness = DEUS MEUMQUE JUS!!!!

Sources / Recommended Readings:

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- Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon -- Reference matter on motto history.



- The Provincial Grand Lodge of The Royal Order of Scotland --History of the Order.
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- A Templar Encyclopedia by Ray V Denslow, Grand Commandery of Missouri, KT. 1951 edition.

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