ISBN 978-1-60643-085-9
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The Library of Congress As An Embodiment Of The American Identity

Gilligan/LaHood

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John F. Gilligan, Ph.D Ray LaHood, Member of Congress

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Case Binding: Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Column capital: Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Contents:

Photography:

Brian W. Baugh:
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Ceiling of the Great Hall: Brian Baugh

Fig. 1

Preface

The Library of Congress has a twofold purpose. The most obvious is that it serves as a highly effective and functional library for Members of Congress and the nation. The less obvious is that it serves as an artistic monument to Western civilization. Our focus is on the Library's monumental and artistic functions [Cover].

The art and architecture of the Library of Congress have a story to be told that has yet to be told. Classical artistic content always has embedded in it intellectual content. And it is the purpose of this book to reveal that content.

The book will demonstrate how the American identity is embodied in the Library's architecture, sculptures, paintings and mosaics. By focusing on the symbols, allegories, and decorations that first dazzle the eye upon visiting the Library, a deeper understanding of who we are or ought to be as Americans emerges.

The Library of Congress is considered to be the most magnificent building in Washington, DC. Strictly speaking, this is the Thomas Jefferson Building, one of three buildings that constitute the Library of Congress. But we will refer to it as the Library of Congress or just simply as the Library.

What's lacking in the current and excellent publications on the Library of Congress is a direct and comprehensive interpretation of the building's architecture, sculpture, mosaics, and paintings. In this work, some of that gap is filled, but not all. Since this book also attempts to serve as a helpful self-directed guide, the selections have been limited to the key features of this monument available to tourists.

The visitor to the Library should be forewarned: The Library makes demands upon the mind as well as the senses. An enriching visit requires mental work: thinking and reflecting. We hope that what is written will help in that process.

Chamber of Commerce members from the 18th Congressional District have often met in the Library's Members of Congress Reading Room. They have had during these yearly Chamber Fly-In events the opportunity to listen to scholars, leaders in Congress, the press, and media regarding national and international issues.

This special edition on the art and architecture of the Library of Congress highlights the building's magnificence [Figs 1, 2]. We are delighted to have the opportunity of presenting it to those who have participated in these annual events.

John F. Gilligan, Ph.D.
President Emeritus
Fayette Companies

Ray LaHood
Member of Congress
18th District, Illinois

Northeast window of the Main Reading Room: Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Acknowledgements

In addition to the sponsors:
Caterpillar Inc. and the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce,
special mention and acknowledgement must be made of the
photographers and graphic designer:

Brian Baugh, photographer
Carol H. Highsmith, photographer, Library of Congress Archive
Erica Mancuso, book layout and design, Caterpillar Inc.

Appreciation is extended to the Library of Congress and its staff:
Dr. Ford Peatross, Curator of Architecture,
Donna Urschell, and Steve Kelly for their generous consultation,
assistance, time, and allocation of office space.

Many have been involved in bringing this work to fruition and deserve recognition:
Joan DeBoer, Deputy Chief and Diane Liesman, Chief of Staff of Congressman LaHood's office;
Roberta Parks, Senior Vice President and COO of the Peoria Chamber of Congress;
Lucinda Young, Administrative Specialist, Workforce Network, Peoria, and
Diana Jean Gilligan for her critiques and proofreading of the text.

Dedication

Caterpillar Inc. is proud
to dedicate this special edition of the
Library of Congress as an Embodiment
of the American Identity to

Congressman Ray LaHood

in recognition of his years of service to our
country and community and devotion
to our nation's ideals.

The Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce is
likewise pleased to be a sponsor of this project.
In particular, the Chamber expresses its
appreciation for the extraordinary conferences,
often held in the Library of Congress, provided by
Congressman LaHood during the
Chamber's annual Fly-Ins.

That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom;
and that government of the people, by the people, for the people,
shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg, Pa
19 November 1863

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 2

Part I

Monument

Introduction

The Library of Congress (Library) was intended to be not just a library, but the nation's most glorious building. The goal was to surpass the European artistic achievements of the past and place America among the artistic cultural centers of the world. Our nation's Library would be the symbol of that achievement.

Congress had chosen a Renaissance style [Figs. 2,3] for the library. Approximately 50 American born painters and sculptors were selected and granted commissions to create works of art within it. Their explicit task was to surpass European libraries in splendor, in devotion to classical culture, and inspire optimism about America's future. It was finally time for America to make its cultural mark upon the world.

America succeeded. This was true when it was completed in 1897 and even now after its restoration in 1997. The Library continues to be our nation's architectural and artistic monumental masterpiece.

But a monument to what? The Library of Congress is a monument to Western civilization that finds its greatest expression in America: "...a new nation," said Lincoln, "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

The American project is driven by an ideal: making the dignity and freedom of man a reality. This theme is central to our interpretation and one which frequently emerges from the Library's artistic works.

On the other hand, the Library is in itself an artistic monumental masterpiece precisely because of its perfect integration of architecture, sculpture, mosaic and painting. It is a beauty for the eye to behold. And here's the trap.

Does Art Have Content?

Modern Americans have been conditioned to view art without content—the splattered canvas. Art has become autonomous, independent of any subject matter such as moral, social, or religious ideas. Form, volume, line, and color are now the sole criteria for judging contemporary art. The motto: Ars *gratiae artis*—art for art's sake—seen under the MGM roaring lion is the motto of our age.

But this was hardly the perspective of 19th century Americans. Good art always involved content. This was specifically true for Renaissance art, which is this building's motif [Fig. 2]. Consequently, understanding the art content is necessary for a proper interpretation of the Library's art and architecture. In marked contrast to our times, this monument is unabashedly replete with civic moral content and moral exhortations.

Principal Theme:

The Library embodies the political, cultural, moral, and, yes, even the theological beliefs upon which this nation was built. It expresses in stone, paint, sculpture, and mosaic the vision, beliefs and aspirations of the American people. For the Library of Congress is the physical embodiment of our American identity. And herein lies the depth and richness of the building.

Without this basic understanding, the building is reduced to nothing more than sensations, a functional library with curious, albeit interesting, paintings, sculptures, decorations, and architecture from some other age.

The word monument is derived from the Latin *monere* and means to honor and remember. But it also has another meaning: to warn. Once the building's symbolism and allegories—its lessons—have been grasped, alarm stirs within. For if we fail to preserve, honor, and serve the beliefs that gave birth to our nation, it will not endure.

Never in the history of humanity until the Declaration of Independence was a nation founded on an idea. We are a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, endowed by our Creator with

certain inalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And to secure these liberties, governments are instituted, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed.

Such an idea! Whoever heard of a people governing themselves? Outside of America, few believed that a government of the people, by the people and for the people could ever endure. But we have endured. How we got there and what it takes to endure is what this Library's architecture, sculpture, mosaics, and paintings celebrate.

A Monument to Civilization:

The building is a functional monument to Western civilization. It is functional in that it serves well as a library and meets the needs of those who use it, the reader [Fig. 4]. Our emphasis here, however, is solely on the monumental dimensions and symbolic meanings related to Western civilization and America as its unique manifestation—in the words of Lincoln, "the last, best, hope of earth."

The root meaning of civilization speaks to a harmony in living together- symbolized as the virtue Concordia in a Pompeiian panel on the Library's second floor [Fig. 5]. Without social harmony: good will, politeness, cooperation, collaboration, and its prerequisites, self-restraint and self-regulation, there can be no social order, only chaos.

Of course, harmony doesn't just materialize on its own. It's the product of knowledge and understanding about human nature, society, and the world in which we live. It comes from a cultural conviction, often nurtured by religious beliefs, that only by working for the common good can we flourish as human beings.

Civilization requires workable social, political, moral, legal and economic institutions. They are the means that allow people to pursue their interests and develop their innate talents. These institutions are the hard won achievements of Western civilization and America's inheritance.

However, there is something more, something upon which all harmony depends. And that is faith. A shared common faith—belief—is necessary for any society that wants internal peace and decent government.

And America is built on faith, a "proposition," said Lincoln. After all, America is the only nation to have been conceived and dedicated to the belief that all men are created equal—"endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights."

But will the inheritance be safeguarded, nurtured, and developed or will it be neglected or squandered? Can a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal really endure given the centrifugal forces of self-interest that this very liberty fuels? This is as great a question for today as it was for Abraham Lincoln in 1863.

This building speaks to these issues. It graphically shows us what is needed if the nation is to endure. And if it is to endure, it will be because we have taken to heart the moral lessons and wisdom contained in it.

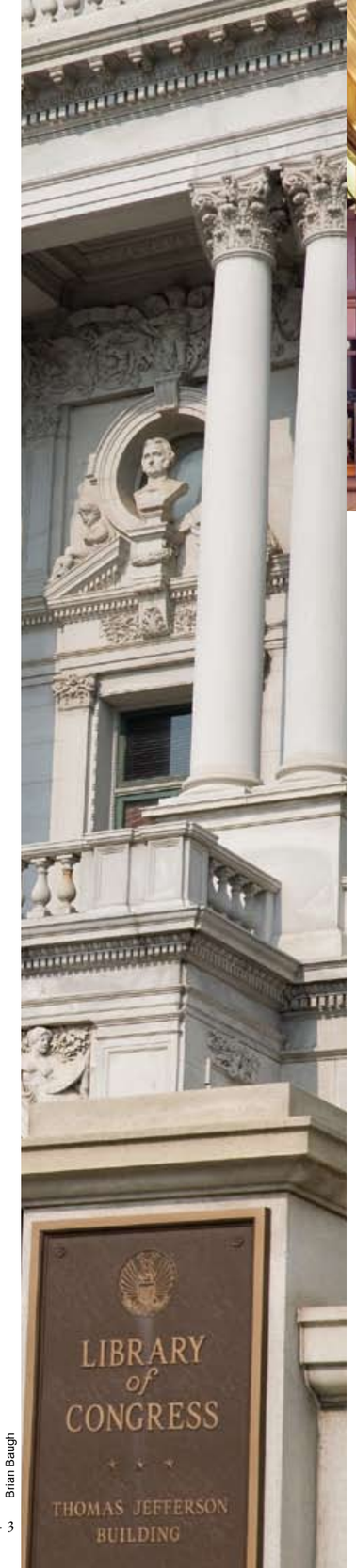
A Visionary:

The Library of Congress was the product of a visionary with a mission: Ainsworth Rand Spofford. He transformed the Library of Congress into a national library and a cultural monument. Without him the Library of Congress would not exist as we know it today.

Spofford was appointed librarian for the Library of Congress by Abraham Lincoln on 31 December 1864. Through his efforts and diligence he was able to persuade Congress to move the library from the United States Capitol to a new state of the art building that would become not just a library for the members of congress, but also a national library for the people of the United States.

It was a long and frustrating process, a life time of work requiring multiple acts of Congress from 1873 to when it was completed in 1897. This alone is a story in itself.

But it would be neglectful of any book on the Library of Congress not to recognize Ainsworth Rand Spofford for his vision, commitment, perseverance, leadership and labors. It was he above all others that set the stage for the Library of Congress to become the world's largest library located in the nation's greatest artistic and architectural structure.



Brian Baugh

Fig. 3

Fig. 4 African and Middle Eastern Reading Room: Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Transition from One Era to Another:

Everything occurs within some historical context. To aid the reader's appreciation and understanding of the Library as a monument, several key themes related to the last quarter of the 19th century must be noted. For example, unless one understands how the American industrial revolution was perceived to be destroying the family and all its traditions, the paintings of Family on the first floor of the north corridor become inexplicable [Figs. 6, 32].

The end of the century was marked by the disparity of conspicuous wealth for the few and the struggle for survival by the hard working masses. Greedy, deceptive, and exploitive business practices prevailed. Political corruption was blatant and patronage existed at every level of government.

Many believed, like president Rutherford Hayes (1877-81), that a plutocracy had replaced democracy. So there is little surprise to find that the largest painting in the Library, Government by Elihu Vedder [Figs. 27, 30], reflects some of these social realities.

The United States population was mushrooming. It almost doubled between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century from 40 to 75 million. America was also shifting from an agricultural to a manufacturing based economy. People were leaving their farms. Cities swelled and social conditions deteriorated.

And then there were the ruling cultural mindsets of the day. A survival of the fittest mentality seemed to justify business and political leaders' thoughts and actions regarding the economy and social conditions.

Religious bigotry and ethnic prejudices were widespread. And worst of all was the socially embedded racism derived from a belief in white supremacy. Extreme racist practices resulted in the wanton and horrible lynching of innocent black citizens by their fellow white Americans. This was part of America's darker side.

Although Mark Twain entitled this period the Gilded Age—an over simplification that borders on distortion, there was another side, more optimistic, progressive, and idealistic. Reforms were in the wind.

The American industrial revolution was explosive and despite its abuses, it was creating a middle class America. By the mid 1890s, America would surpass Britain and become the world's leading manufacturer and exporter. Although the American navy ranked 17th behind China and Turkey in 1893, it would be equal to Britain's by the end of the century.

The supposed Robber Barons: Carnegie, Rockefeller, Duke, Vanderbilt, Stanford, the Pillsburys, Adolphus Busch, McCormick, John Deer, Harriman, J.P, Morgan, and Sears/Roebuck and others, were wealth creators providing the American people with the world's highest standard of living. The majority of them poured most of their wealth into foundations from which Americans still benefit today.

Fig. 5 Brian Baugh

Every president from Grant (Hays, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, and Cleveland) to McKinley strived to make inroads against racial injustice. McKinley, to emphasize the point, refused to stay in any hotel that would not allow blacks to rent a room. The great anthropologist, Frank Boas, challenged racial superiority beliefs with hard data demonstrating that there was none. New attitudes were forming albeit slowly.

Politics too was changing. The patronage or spoils systems was under attack along with a public outcry for civil service and labor reform. And it came,

The historian Paul Johnson described the period as "immensely materialistic but overwhelmingly idealistic." The same could be said today. Like Americans then, we too, in Johnson's words still, "want to make money, to do good, and also to do the right thing."

So in contrast to that materialistic side of America stands the Library of Congress. Brilliantly etched in it are America's ideals, aspirations, and noble beliefs. Dedicated and opened to the public in November 1897, the Library expressed all that America hoped to be but was not yet. It marked a transition to a more progressive century.

Was There an Intelligent Design?

One of the less discussed issues concerning the paintings, sculptures, mosaics, and architecture of the Library is the question: Was there a grand or unifying plan for these artistic works? Well, not really. So how can there be an overall and unifying interpretation that this book proposes?

The 50 or so American sculptors and painters commissioned or employed to decorate the building were under the supervision of architect Edward Pearce Casey and the building engineer Bernard Green. The general instructions were to provide works that highlighted human achievement.

The sculptors were given a little more direction, but the painters were free to select their own topic. Casey and Green did make a few changes and corrections, but on the whole the artists did what they wanted to do in the way they wanted.

The entire project could have turned into a hodgepodge of disconnected works of art and sculptures. But it didn't. And the fundamental reason is that these American artists drew from the only traditions they knew: their American heritage and their training in Paris at the Ecoles des Beaux Arts, which was the most influential tradition of the time.

The Beaux Art School was rooted in the classical tradition [Fig. 7]. And the Classical tradition reflects in its art philosophical concepts of government and what it means to be a human being. Consequently, these artists following that tradition could not help but generate works of art that share a unity around the themes of the human condition and what's needed to create a civil society and an American society in particular.

Fig. 7 Brian Baugh

Fig. 6 Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

I call architecture frozen music.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Brian Baugh

Fig. 8

Part II
Architecture

The Exterior Building

Architecture always makes a claim beyond mere function. This is particularly true for great architecture. And the public buildings of Washington DC are great architecture. So, what's the architectural claim being made?

It's a statement about the foundational beliefs of Western civilization and a reminder of the truths upon which Western civilization and America in particular have been built: representative government, consent of the governed, and, in the words of the Founders, the "sacred rights" of the people.

Yet the Library's architecture is different. It's Renaissance and stands in sharp contrast to Washington's other monumental buildings with their purer classical Roman and Greek temple architecture. What, then, is Renaissance architecture?

Simply speaking, Renaissance architecture uses the rules of ancient Greek temple and Roman civic and religious architecture in constructing buildings [Fig. 8]. And these rules, called the grammar of classical architecture, make all the difference. The technical name for these rules is the orders; they are known as the Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite orders.

For our purposes, what's important is that the size of each of these famous columns and their entablatures (the cross beams that the columns support) are constructed according to mathematical rules of proportion or ratios. In other words, the length of a given column's diameter to its height, the ratio, controls the size of every part of the building related to that column. Otherwise it would look and be out of whack.

The orders, rules, ensure that the proportions of a building's three dimensional structure will be aesthetically pleasing, i.e. beautiful. But here's the point: The orders expressed a belief in an underlying fixed rational order within nature itself. And mathematics, ratios, that is, number, captured that reality.

The world might appear chaotic and irrational with its earthquakes, stormy seas, illnesses, and deaths. But behind all that was a rational order. And this is part of our Western inheritance and a message contained, albeit often ignored or forgotten, in the Library's architecture.

The first use, function, and purpose of temple and monumental architecture was for veneration and then commemoration. The Parthenon was for the veneration of Athena and commemoration of the Greek victory over the Persians. And the Pantheon was a house for all the gods of the Roman Empire and in honor of the achievements of Emperor Augustus. Right from the get go monumental architecture embraced both secular and sacred concepts.

The columns and entablature (the beam resting upon the columns [Fig. 8] with its cornice, frieze, and architrave) are rooted in a Greek religious tradition of worship. In Greek, the word temple (temenos) designates a cut off space, a sacred place or precinct, where sacred activities occur before a divinity. Yet it could also serve as a secular marker or monument of achievement.

The Romans incorporated Greek architecture but added the dome and arch. Greco-Roman architecture served as the basic model for Renaissance architecture and its source of inventiveness even to this day.

But more importantly and for our purposes, inherent in this architecture is a sense of order, balance, and proportion. The Greco-Roman world perceived a deep underlying order in the universe that could be expressed mathematically. Rationality and order was intrinsic to creation and their architecture reflected it.

Monumental architecture, then, by its very nature connotes the sacred. Its beauty, structured around order and balance, hints at a divine force at work. A sense of awe naturally arises within us. And beneath the dome of the Library's reading room there is silence [Fig. 40]. Yes, it's to aid study, but perhaps there's more at work here: "...in apprehension how like a god," said Hamlet in describing our humanity.

The Grotto of Neptune:

A good view of the exterior building can be gained by standing on the opposite side of First Street facing the Grotto of Neptune [Fig. 9]. But what does one make of this Roman-like, bronze sculpture of Neptune surrounded by Tritons, sea serpents, nymphs, and wild horses? Perhaps the Trevi Fountain in Rome comes quickly to mind.

This is the first clue to a different kind of architecture, something right out of the Renaissance. However, is there any meaning here or is this just pure amusement?

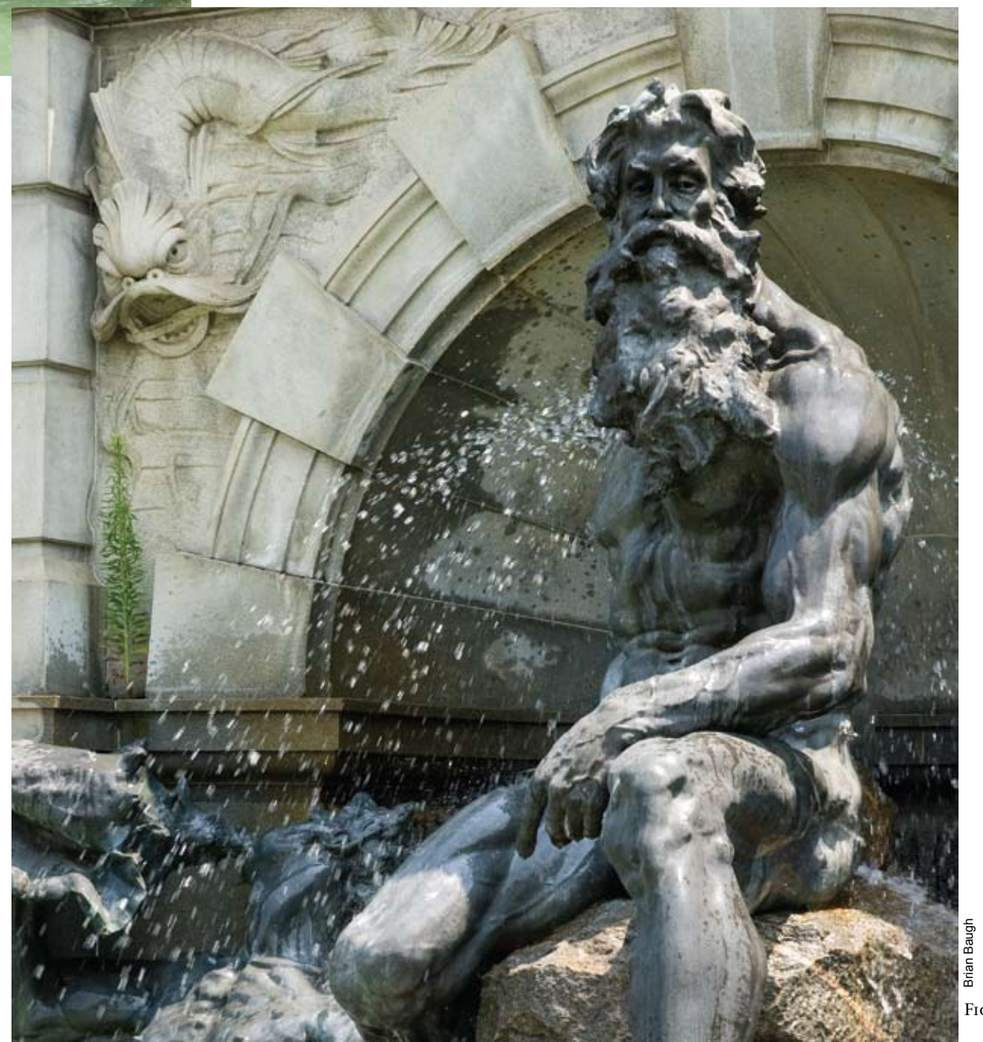
The Renaissance drew upon Greek and Roman art, called Classical. Neptune was the Latin name the Romans, who made the Greek gods their own, gave to the god Poseidon. And Poseidon personified control over the irrational forces of nature.

Classical art, as previously mentioned, always contains philosophical content. What, then, does the Neptune sculpture have to say?

Just as Neptune controls the wild forces [Fig. 10] of the sea by physical force, man controls the forces of nature, including himself, through rational force. Reason over passion is the ordering principle for civilization and Neptune symbolizes this Greek and Roman insight.

Brian Baugh

Fig. 9



Brian Baugh

Fig. 10

The Portico Busts:

Yet reason alone—even enlightened self-interest—is never sufficient to control or order the passions of human nature. Civilization requires virtue, that is, the right habits.

Located above the grotto, on the second floor level of the Library there are nine busts on the portico [Fig. 8]. The middle one is Benjamin Franklin who stated: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom." And those virtues, eight in all, are necessary for the survival of our republic [Part IV].

To the right of Franklin are the busts of Macaulay, Hawthorne [Fig. 12], Scott and-on the south side-Dante. On the left of Franklin are Goethe, Irving, Emerson [Fig. 8] and-on the north side-Demosthenes.

Why these men? They have contributed ideas that have shaped Western civilization and American life As a group, the Portico Busts portray the essentials of the Renaissance character: rational, logical and theoretical yet practical, intuitive, and imaginative.

Franklin:

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), who is given center stage [Figs. 8, 11], was America's patriarch of practical thought and philosophy, which in those days also meant science. He became America's first exemplar of the self-made man, rising from poverty to one of the richest men in the colonies. His research and experiments in electricity made him the first world famous American.

Franklin was one of the few founders who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. As ambassador to France during the Revolutionary War he was not only able to obtain the necessary loans to finance the war, but also secure the critical military assistance from France to win the war.

Demosthenes:

On the far left, out of sight and facing north, is Demosthenes (384-322 BC). He was known for his passion for the rule of law as essential to the survival of a democratic society.

It's an interesting coincidence that he now faces the Supreme Court building, begun in the 1930s. In his famous Philippics (warnings about the tyranny of King Philip II of Macedon), he gave an analogy fit for our own time: "Just as a house finds its strength in its infrastructures, so too does the state with its infrastructures of truth and justice."

Emerson:

Looking at the portico, from left to right [Fig. 8], is Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). He was one of America's most influential authors and thinkers, a philosopher. He challenged traditional thought from religion to science.

His movement, called Transcendentalism, was a reaction against scientific rationalism. He argued that the human being, the whole, was greater than the sum of its parts. Science could only address the parts.

Emerson believed that there was a mystical spirit in man that united him with all of nature and that it should be listened to and followed. His Transcendentalism was quite popular among the American intelligentsia and art communities.

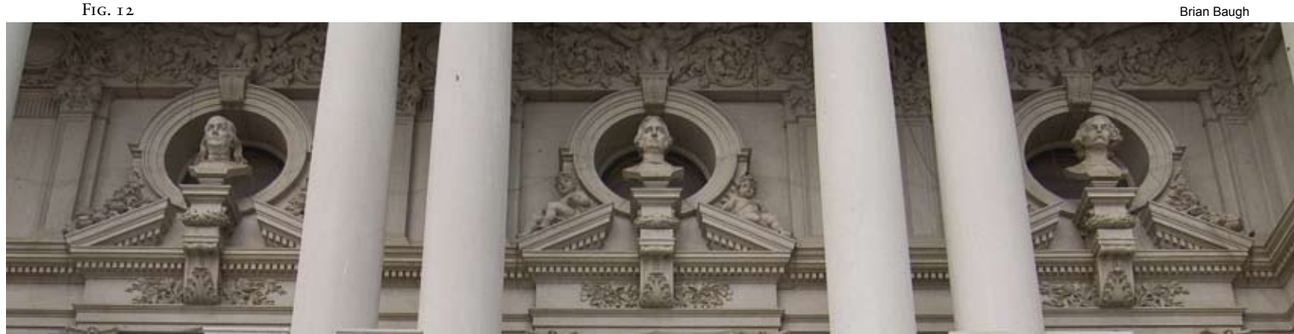
He was highly critical of what he viewed as a materialistic culture saying: "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." His observation about human nature still serves as a warning to us today: "There is a capacity of virtue in us. And there is a capacity of vice to make your blood creep."

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Brian Baugh



Irving:

Washington Irving (1783-1859) was the first American literary humorist and author to achieve international fame. He's most remembered for his book Rip Van Winkle. He served as minister to Spain under President Tyler in 1842.

Irving was identified as the man who brought about American literary independence and the first literary ambassador from the New World to the Old. As such, he was the first American writer to attract an international audience.

As an artist, he was concerned about the marginal role the artist had in American life. His critique was that in a culture devoted to material progress, there was little room for the imagination. In a culture consumed by the present and future, the past received no attention. America, Irving believed, was in need of a history of itself if it were to grow wisely as well as materially.

Goethe:

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was for all practical purposes, due to political default, the city manager of the duchy of Saxe-Weimar, which, at the time, was just one of about three hundred disparate units that we now call Germany.

The Weimar duchy was the leading literary center of the Germanies. The book that quickly comes to mind when we think of Goethe is Faust: about a philosopher who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power. It marks the end of the Renaissance literary tradition that began with Dante.

Goethe was more than a poet or novelist. He was a philosopher, scientist, psychologist, lawyer, and administrator. Historians have identified him as the last universal man or the final Renaissance man of history whose scope of knowledge embraced everything that was known, a polymath. Specialization was soon to follow and mankind would know more and more about less and less.

He reflected upon the human condition throughout his lifetime and became the sage of his generation. One of his many insights: "Every man hears only what he understands." By the time of his death, he was the most famous personage in Europe.

Macaulay:

To the right of Franklin is Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859). He is hardly a household name. But he does illustrate this book's basic theme: The Library is a monument to Western civilization that finds fulfillment in America's articulation of the inherent dignity of the individual.

Macaulay was one of England's and Western civilization's greatest historians. He presented history as a progression. The point of emphasis is on the fact that human beings not only can but have improved the lot of mankind. And Western civilization is humanity's preeminent example of what it takes to make a better world. The Library of Congress is a monument to this reality.

History gives us perspective. Macaulay noted that "no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present."

Hawthorne:

Nathanial Hawthorne (1804-1864) became a central figure in the American Renaissance. He was the great master of American fiction and helped to establish the American short story as a significant art form. He was a friend of Emerson and participant in the Transcendental movement.

Before Freud, he was exploring the hidden motivations in his characters. His book, The Scarlet Letter, was America's first psychological novel. Therein, he delves deeply into the human heart. Consequently, it is still a book for our own time.

A quote from the Scarlet letter and fitting for our elected representatives: "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."

Scott:

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was a world famous historical novelist. He, like Emerson, Goethe, and Hawthorne were Romanticists who opposed the rationalism of the Enlightenment.

Romanticism held that man was not just a rational animal; he was also an animal with wild passions and feelings. Intuition, creativity, emotion, feelings, spirit, religion, and imagination were as essential to human life as reason and abstraction. A life of pure reason seemed to extinguish what it was to be human.

Scott's novels taught history by demonstrating how complex and varied each human life was. Tolerance was a major theme in his historical works, many of which were about cultural conflicts such as *Ivanhoe*.

School children used to be required to memorize his adage: "Oh! What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

Dante:

On the south side of the portico, is Alighieri Dante (1265-1321). Dante begins the Renaissance, which makes him an appropriate bust for this building.

Dante is the first to break away from Latin and write in the language of the people. He lived in a very corrupt religious, political, and social age. His Divine Comedy is an allegory about human life in the form of a vision of the world beyond the grave. He attempts to enlighten people through the truths embedded in his poetry.

How many of us can not resonate with Dante's opening words of the Inferno? "Midway in our life's journey, I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood."

The Ethnic Heads:

There are 33 ethnic heads that surround the Library and serve as keystones for the first floor windows [Figs. 13, 14]. The typical gargoyles found in European monuments and cathedrals have been replaced by all the known ethnic groups that comprise the human race. The ethnic heads can certainly symbolize what's unique about America.

The House of Representatives in the United States Congress stands as verification. There you will find members from almost every racial, religious, and ethnic group who are united by a common belief: All men are created equal with the right to live their lives according to the dictates of their conscience. The clear implication is that there is an obligation to form a society that articulates this belief not only in legislation, but in everyday behavior.

This is our American faith and project. It's the principle upon which our nation was founded and differentiates itself from among all others. So we find here the essence of multiculturalism—a shared common humanity—expressed in stone decades before this term ever gained verbal currency.

Fig. 14 Brian Baugh

Fig. 13

Brian Baugh

Fig. 15

Brian Baugh

The Entrances: Arches and Bronze Doors

The Library of Congress's grand stairways lead to three arches that serve as porches to massive bronze door entrances to the Library's first floor [Fig. 8]. There are multiple yet complementary story lines here.

The arches represent from left to right: Literature, Science, and Art [Fig. 15]. The bronze doors and their tympani above them represent: Tradition, Printing, and Writing. But the substantive meanings are contained within the sculptures themselves.

The two almost life-sized female figures in the spandrels surrounding each arch visibly personify the themes of literature, science and art. But they do something more. Each pair reflects two sides of the same coin of our humanity: active and passive, reflection and action, and theory and practice.

The Renaissance understanding of what it meant to be a fully developed person required the proper balance of both attributes. Effective engagement in the real world demanded reflection as well as action.

The tympani above the doors portray how information, knowledge, and wisdom were conveyed from one generation to another. First there was oral tradition [Fig. 16], theme of the north (left) entrance, then written transmissions [Fig. 19], theme of the south (right) entrance, and, finally, in the center, the art of printing [Fig. 21] multiplied the ability to disseminate more information and knowledge to more people than ever before.

The unifying theme here is that we are bound together in a common humanity. Civilization is the product of and founded on the works and achievements of all those who have gone before. Taking each one separately strengthens this interpretation.

Tradition:

The tympanum representing Tradition [Fig. 16] is an American version of Giovanni Bellini's 1490 painting of Sacra Conversazione for the San Giobbe altarpiece, now located in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

The Virgin and Child in conversation with saints from different historical periods have been replaced. In their stead is a female figure with a child next to her surrounded by four figures: a Native American with arrows, Chief Joseph, a Norseman with a steel cap, a prehistoric man with a stone ax, and a shepherd representing the nomadic races and the oral tradition.

Beneath the tympanum are the doors, each with a bronze panel of a female figure: one holding a lyre representing imagination, the other, a widow, holds her husband's helmet and sword representing memory of the heroic past [Figs. 17, 18].

The bronze doors' symbols and the sculptures of Literature found on the arches tie together. Yet a closer look at the bronze faces reveal something more, deeper, and human with which we can all identify.

Writing:

The south door tympanum representing Writing has another female figure with a pen in her hand and scroll on her lap [Fig. 19]. Two little children are beside her being taught to read and write. Surrounding them are four figures: an Egyptian and Jew on the right, and a Christian and Greek.

The Greek has a lyre in hand, symbol of poetry, and the Egyptian a stylus, symbol of writing. The Jew with a patriarchal staff and the Christian with a cross are kneeling. They represent their religious influence on the development of Western civilization.

The two bronze figures on the doors below personify Truth (left) and Research [Fig. 20]. In one hand Truth holds a mirror and a serpent in the other. The mirror represents the importance of carefully reflecting reality and the serpent refers to wisdom. Both must be joined to present truthful accounts to the reader.

Research holds a torch of learning. Learning is like a flame that illuminates and frees us from darkness and ignorance. This is a theme that consistently repeats itself throughout the Library and culminates in a final allegorical painting in the dome of the Main Reading Room of the veil of ignorance being lifted [Fig. 67].

Figs. 17 & 18

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 16

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Printing:

The center tympanum is entitled Ars Typographica (Typographical Arts). Minerva, goddess of wisdom and learning, sits in the middle distributing printed products carried by winged cherubs [Fig. 21]. These are her gift to mankind.

In comparison to the Minerva like figures in Tradition and Writing, she is dressed with all the traditional symbols associated with Minerva: the owl at her side, the breastplate and aegis (shield) with the head of Medusa. She is surrounded with a number of symbols related to printing such as an ancient printing press, inspiration symbolized by a Pegasus, and filial piety represented by the Stork symbolizing faithful reproduction in printing.

Minerva plays a central role in the art theme of the Library. She is located in the entrance vestibule, found in various paintings, and occupies the largest and most prominent artistic space in the Library. The function of Minerva in Western civilization is described below.

Beneath the tympanum are two beautiful bronze figures clothed in Minerva robes holding flaming torches [Fig. 22]. The figure on the right represents Intellect; her features are more chiseled than her companion. The other represents the Humanities; she has softer lines expressing compassion and understanding.

Fig. 19

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 21

Fig. 20

Fig. 22

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Part III

Government

The Great Hall

The Library's two major works of art are in the Great Hall by Elihu Vedder: the frescoes of Government on the first floor and the Minerva mosaic on the second floor. These form the libraries central artistic themes related to Western civilization.

In the center of and on the first floor are the points of the compass etched in marble and surrounded by the Zodiac. It offers an excellent overall view of the Library [Fig. 23]. And it's a perfect location for visitors to orient themselves to the building.

As previously mentioned, Renaissance architecture carries forth memories, reminders, and wisdom from the early classical periods of Greece and Rome. Like the exterior architecture, the interior speaks to the importance of the common good before individual interest to ensure the survival of the community. The Parthenon was the exemplar expression of this concept where the Greeks sacrificed their lives in defending Athens' freedom from Persian rule.

The architecture also spoke to a set of beliefs: an underlying truth or order in nature, recognition of a divine force or higher power, a belief in humans' ability to control and shape their world, and a belief that rational order can prevail over the irrational. The Parthenon of Athens, the Pantheon of Rome, and the Library of Congress are all monuments to these beliefs and express a sense of confidence in progress based on successful past experiences.

The Commemorative Arch:

Arches [Fig. 23] were symbols of accomplishments and individual achievement. The arch that leads to the entrance of the Main Reading Room is entitled: Library of Congress [Fig. 24]. The inscription above it, flanked by two eagles, summarizes the history of the Library:

Erected under the Acts of Congress of April 15 1886, October 2 1888 and March 2 1889 by Brig. Gen. Thos. Lincoln Casey Chief of Engineers U.S.A. Bernard R. Green Supt. and Engineer John L. Smithmeyer Architect Paul J. Pelz Architect Edward Pearce Casey Architect.

General Thomas Lincoln Casey had overall responsibility for building the Library. His son, Edward Pearce Casey, was responsible for the interior design: the Library's sculptures, paintings, mosaics, and decorations.

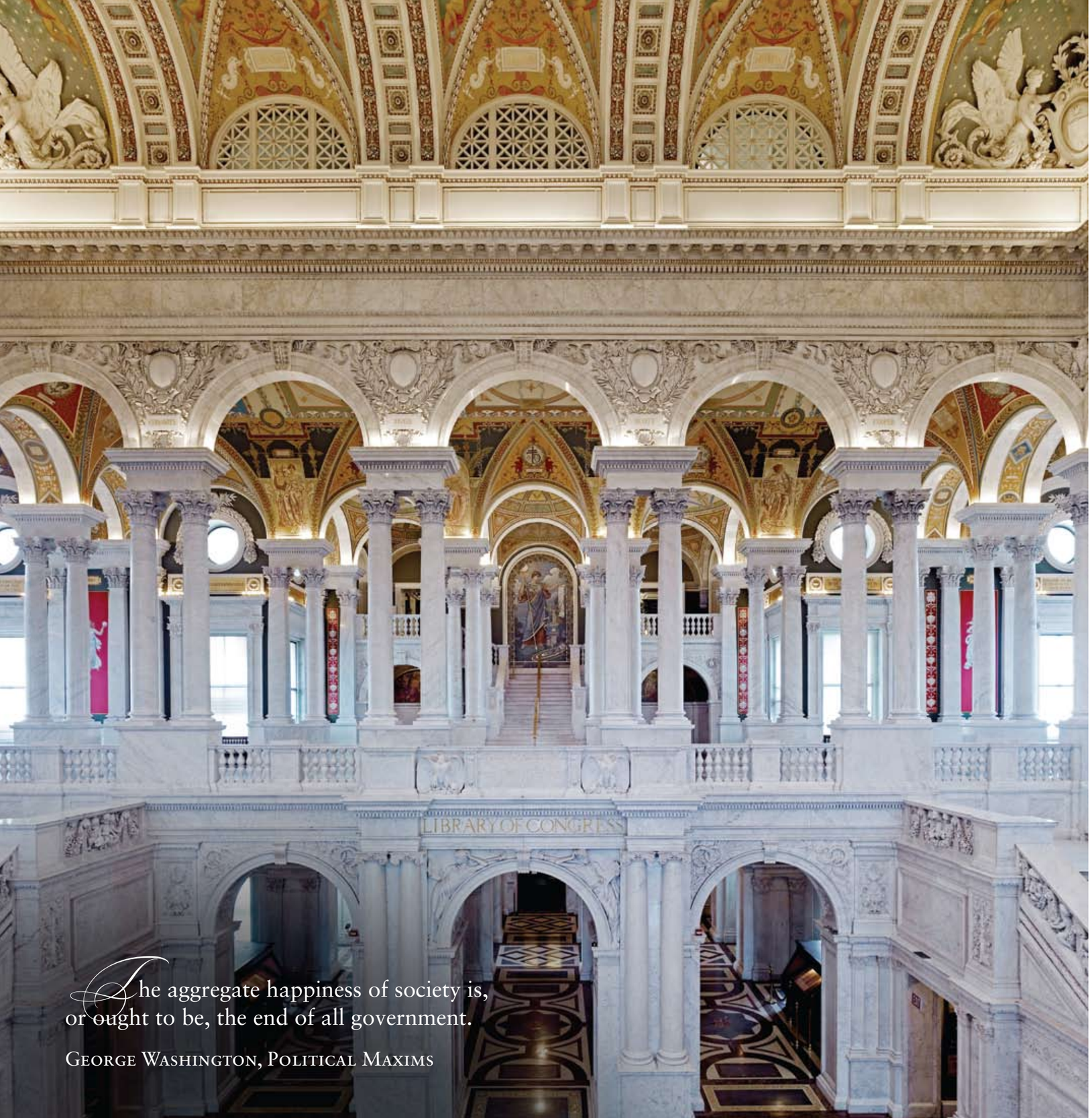
Edward Casey had studied at the Ecoles des Beaux Arts in Paris. Like any graduate from the Beaux Arts he was steeped in Renaissance art and its classical foundation.

Gen. Bernard Green was responsible for the daily construction.. Both he and Gen. Casey were from the Corps of Army Engineers. They were experienced no nonsense builders with reputations for excellence and efficiency. Their ability to control costs left enough money in the congressionally approved construction budget for decorating the building. Amazingly, the interior design was never included in the budget.

Smithmeyer and Pelz were the original architects whose drawings were selected from several competitions in the early 1870s. However, their relationships with congress, unfounded accusations, and inability to work effectively in the public domain led to their dismissals. But the original design of the Library that exists today is theirs.

Within the spandrels surrounding the arch are two sculptures [Figs. 23, 24]. A young man on the left is reading a book. The other is of an older man contemplating the experiences of life. Just like the sculptures on the outside entrance arches, they symbolize action and reflection.

Again, the Renaissance concept of a fully developed person is artistically expressed in stone. One learns from books but also from reflecting on life experiences (the older man). Civilization is the result of thoughtful and reflective action, not impulse.



Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 23

The aggregate happiness of society is,
or ought to be, the end of all government.

George Washington, Political Maxims

Fig. 24 Brian Baugh

Italian Renaissance and Humanism:

In comparison to most of Washington, DC's architecture, the Library of Congress is a product of the late 19th century American Renaissance, which is modeled after the Italian Renaissance [Fig. 25].

Any visitor to the US Capitol will have already noticed the typical Roman dome with the religious like Renaissance painting by Brumidi called the Apotheosis of George Washington where he is being carried off into the heavens. But this is a style no longer familiar to us and consequently requires effort to appreciate what it represents.

Renaissance means rebirth or renewal. At the time (1500s) of Christopher Columbus, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo the Renaissance was in full bloom. It refers to a period of renewed interest in Classical Greek and Roman achievements in the arts, sciences, and politics.

The Renaissance also had another focus: Humanism. Shakespeare captures its essence in words the way Michelangelo did in stone and paint.

> What a piece of work is man
> How noble in reason... In action how like an angel,
> In apprehension how like a god.
>
> Hamlet, II.2.305

The core thought behind Renaissance thinking was that the world could be known through the application of reason. Knowledge or science, called philosophy, was a means of emancipation from ignorance. The humanists of that day believed that a better world could and should be made while working out their personal and eternal salvation. This was known as the marriage of Faith and Reason.

The art of the Renaissance reflected a belief in an orderly, knowable, optimistic, and even a perfectible world. So, too, is it with the American Renaissance. Furthermore, it models Roman architecture, expressive of the Roman Republic—representative government.

American Renaissance:

For Americans, understanding and knowledge—religion too, but not government sponsored—were believed to be the key for social peace, harmony and order. Ignorance was the real enemy of mankind. This was part of our inheritance from the European Enlightenment.

Was this idealistic? Yes. But the Renaissance was all about rebirth and renewal driven by ideals. And America was the greatest ideal of all Western civilization. It was a nation founded in a concept, a belief, and an ideal: ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, and that they can govern themselves guided by this fundamental belief.

One of the tenets of the American Renaissance was that the institutions of civilized society were grounded in the cultures of aboriginal people. The American Renaissance stressed the concept of a common human nature and that the peoples of the world contributed to the general progress of civilization. The tympani above the bronze entrance doors and the Library's ethnic heads express that concept [Figs. 16, 19].

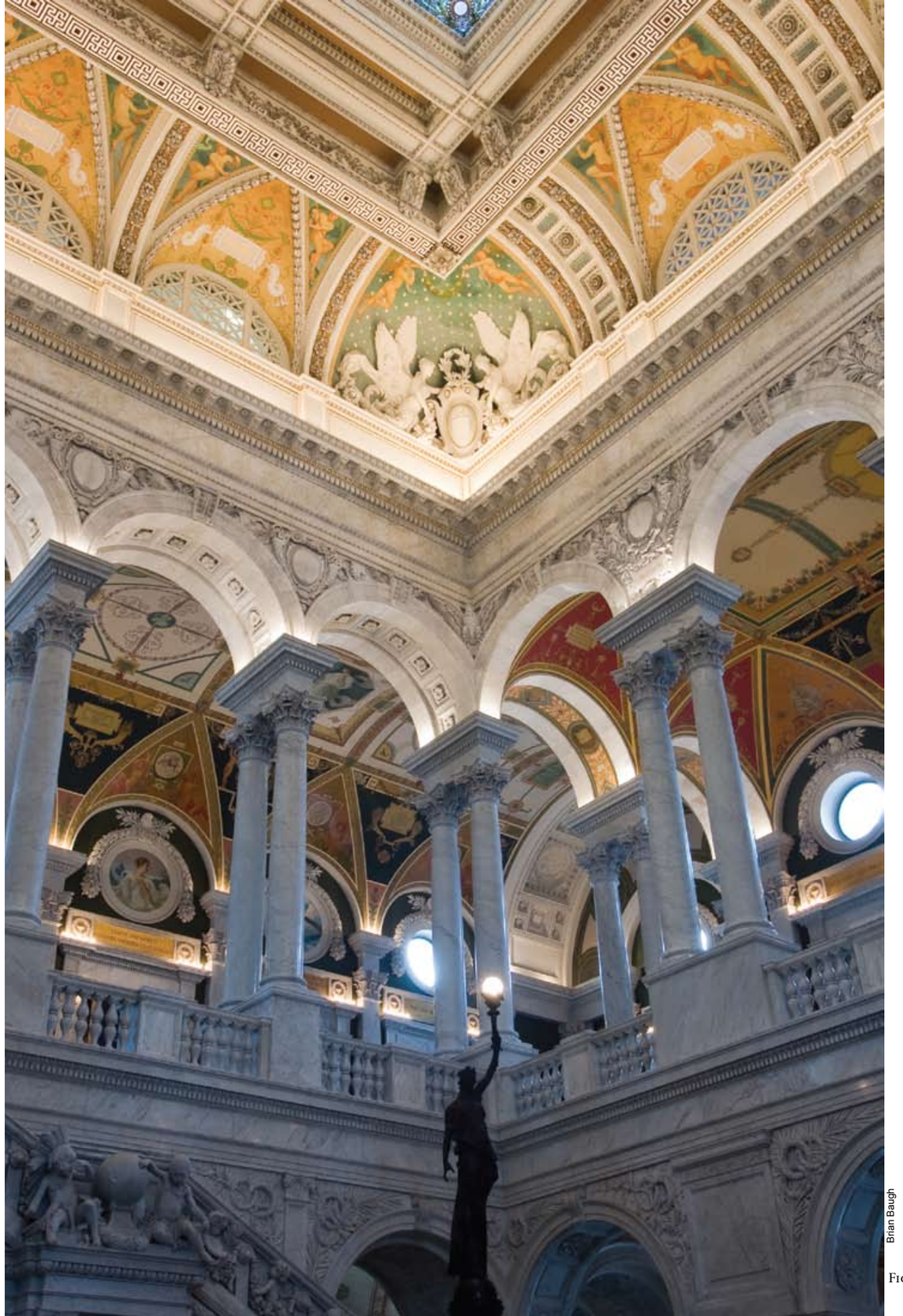
The idea of progression, an optimistic one, pervaded late 19th century thought. America was understood to be an outcome of the progression of Western philosophical, political, and religious thought over the centuries. It's a progression that's visibly represented in the paintings inside the dome over the Main Reading Room [Fig. 68].

The implications of this belief in the dignity of the individual were not fully perceived much less implemented at the time. American history demonstrates how this faith has grown in comprehension and practice. But as Abraham Lincoln reminded us at Gettysburg: "It is for us, the living...to be dedicated to the unfinished work...[and] to the great task remaining before us...."

Right of Free Speech:

The Library is a physical sign and symbol of one of our fundamental rights: the right to free speech. The free expression of ideas is a given of American life. On the other hand, the Constitution also guarantees the freedom and practice of religion.

The Library of Congress reflects this attitude. The Library contains many religious themes. For religion has always been an integral part of the American culture. In fact, it was the core of American culture during the last quarter of the 19th century.



Brian Baugh

Fig. 25

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 26

Yet no one religion, as was the intent of Congress, receives any preferred recognition. Nor does it in this building. The architects were instructed by Congress that the Library be free from any controversies of denominational religion or political parties.

The Entrance Vestibule:

If one entered the Library through the bronze doors, they would find themselves in the vestibule with archways into the Great Hall. The Vestibule is rich in ornamentation and characterized by pairs of Minervas between the arches [Fig. 26].

The pairs are similar to one another. One represents war, the other peace. The Minerva of War holds a sword in one hand and a torch of learning in the other. The Minerva of Peace holds a globe and in the other hand a scroll.

The symbols convey multiple meanings. Learning, pursuing the truth, and free discussion dispel ignorance (torch of learning), but must be defended (sword) against the forces of repression that always subject truth to power. The globe held by the Minerva of Peace symbolizes the universality of knowledge. The scroll represents the means, books, by which we store and transmit knowledge and wisdom to others.

There is no naïveté here. Truth upon which all justice rests is always under attack from within as well as from without. It must always be defended. Conflict is inevitable. Without the sword there can be no peace. This is the wisdom of human experience symbolized by Minerva.

The Murals on Government:

At the entrance to the Main Reading Room are the lunettes of Elihu Vedder's famous murals on Government. This is the largest set of murals in the Library and one of them occupies a central location above the entrance (no longer in use) to the Reading Room [Fig. 27]. Since these pictures portray core beliefs that form the American identity and contain more symbols than any other work in the library, it merits a more detailed interpretation of its symbols as well as an expanded explanation.

Vedder draws from an old republican tradition of wisdom on government, based on historical experience, and the consequences for society that flow from either good or bad government. His work is modeled directly upon a set of medieval frescos (1338-1340) by Ambrogio Lorenzetti located in the Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall) of Siena, Italy.

These five murals express abstract concepts fundamental to the American identity. The pictures, like the others in the Library, are allegorical and not intended to be life-like representations of people. Their formalism rather than realism highlights the ideas at play; this kind of artistic style aims more at the mind's eye than the eye itself [Fig. 27].

Lorenzetti and Vedder:

Lorenzetti was one of the first to make monumental secular pictures that speak to political life and how we order ourselves in society. The world is presented in purely human terms. Furthermore, they legitimate republican forms of government in contrast to a world of monarchy and aristocracy.

In Siena art was politics and politics was art. Lorenzetti's paintings were revolutionary. They offered a whole new way of thinking about the best form of government and what was required to maintain it.

There was no reference to religion and no reference to Christian doctrine. Good and bad government was understood, at least by Lorenzetti, to be influenced by the same natural forces that are at work in all of nature. This is why his work is considered one of the greatest political statements in Western art.

Lorenzetti portrays the factors that make government successful—virtues—as well as the forces—vices—that could destroy it. Lorenzetti's frescoes contained real people in real places on three large walls. They were explicit, and supported and explained by words. Nothing was left open to interpretation; the messages were clear and specific.

Vedder painted the same themes on five small lunettes but allegorically. So to fully appreciate Vedder's allegory and symbols one must first understand Lorenzetti's aims. First, the virtue of justice is the centralizing principle and

force of any republic. Second, the virtue of self-restraint is its cornerstone. Finally, the common good is the primary end of all legislation.

Furthermore, the Achilles heel of a republic is self-interest prevailing over the common good. Justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence are the essential virtues for a republic's survival. The inevitable end of corruption, vice, is the destruction of the republic. Consequently, vigilance and corrective action must be an integral part of a republic's daily life.

Vedder brings all of this together in his allegory on government. His central lunette portrays Western civilization's birth of a new order. It is represented by a female figure holding a tablet with an excerpt from the Gettysburg Address: A government of the people, by the people, for the people [Fig. 27].

She also serves as a modern American version of the medieval image and symbol for the Common Good. The idea at play here is that whatever doesn't serve the public good destroys it. There is also a direct message to those who govern. In her hand she holds a golden rule.

Behind her are leaves blossoming from an oak tree, symbol of strength, stability, and durability. Two winged boys are on each side of her. One holds a sword of justice signifying the eternal need to protect and defend republican government. The other holds a bridle signifying the need of self-restraint and good order for republican government to endure.

She sits on a bench supported by two urns, the traditional symbol for voting, reflecting that republican government depends on the consent of the governed. Two lions complete the bench's support structure. Lions symbolized strength and power, but in Siena they also symbolized the people of the city-state. In the end, a republic rests upon its people.

But the practical workings and consequences of good government are symbolized in the murals to the right and those of corrupt government in the murals to the left.

There are two sets of story lines. The general narrative is blatantly obvious. Good and honest government brings forth peace and prosperity. [Figs. 28, 29]. On the other hand, corrupt government eventually results in anarchy and the destruction of the state [Figs. 30, 31].

The second story line is specific to the individual murals. And there's no guess work figuring out what's going on here either. Iconological symbols are abundant: urns, scales, swords, wreaths, etc., dating back to the classical period of Greece and Rome.

Fig. 27

Brian Baugh

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

Fig. 31

Brian Baugh

But some symbols are easy to miss. In Good Administration [Fig. 28], the personification sits on a throne with an arch. The arch is a symbol of democracy in that each stone (the citizen) shares an equal responsibility for its existence. Behind the arch is a fig tree bearing fruit, symbol of summer.

Her left hand rests on a shield in four parts. It represents that the ideal democracy has within it an even balance of parties and classes. Two youths are engaged in the voting process, the boy carries a book indicative of knowledge and education required for voting; and the girl winnows the chaff from the wheat symbolizing a careful selection among the candidates for office. And the wheat field behind them represents intelligence, virtue, and diligent work.

The effects of Good Administration result in Peace and Prosperity [Fig. 29]. The olive tree behind the central figure of this mural stands for peace and the season of spring. The olive wreathes symbolize excellence and will serve as awards for those who achieve it.

One youth typifies art with the temple in the background representing architecture and the lyre poetry. The other youth symbolizes agriculture, which is also a metaphor for a just and permanent government, the conditions necessary for agriculture to thrive.

The figure in Corrupt Administration [Fig. 30] is seated in front of an autumn vine from which leaves are falling, suggesting decay. The entire scene is also an indirect reference to the social, political, and economic times.

On one side of the central figure is a closed factory, shut down due to strikes, and a laborer in search of work. This is in contrast to exploitive business, using law (the book) for its own advantage and benefiting from the special favors of government allowing their factories to flourish.

The natural consequences of Corrupt Administration are the destruction of society and government itself. It's summarized in one word: Anarchy [Fig. 31].

The naked figure, with barren branches behind her, symbol of winter, stands precariously, with one foot on the broken arch and the other is trampling the scroll of learning. In one hand she turns the scroll of learning into a torch and in the other holds a wine cup, symbolizing anarchy's intoxicating effects and frenzy.

The two figures that surround her are participating in the destruction of civilization. One represents ignorance and uses a surveyor stick to wreck civilization by uprooting its foundations. A book representing knowledge and the bible representing the moral order are being cast into the abyss.

The other figure symbolizes violence and is about to pull the cornerstone of civilization out from the foundation. The bomb predicts the inevitable destruction of all.

But what is not so obvious in these murals are the implicit statements about human nature and the natural law. The law of nature inscribed in all our hearts states that we are to do good and avoid evil, such as injuring innocent persons (Note [Fig. 27] the golden rule in Government's hands.) The entire series deals with good and bad, right and wrong, the proclivities of human nature to do what we know we shouldn't do, and the fruits of good and evil acts.

These murals illustrate our historical continuity with and inheritance from Western civilization. They offer wisdom and moral insights. We forget them at our own peril.

The Family:

The scenes represent life in the mythological land of Arcadia [Fig. 6]. It's an imaginary land, a non-Judeo-Christian version of a Garden of Eden, first developed by the Roman poet Virgil in his Eclogues. It served as a stage for Renaissance artistic and literary works free of all the conflicts of modern city and street life.

But it did more. It was a means of critiquing contemporary society. Recall the times of the late 1890s: a major depression, people forced to leave the farms, overcrowded cities, an unfettered market economy, grueling working conditions, and all the evils that Marx had predicted about capitalism. Social breakdown followed with a vengeance.

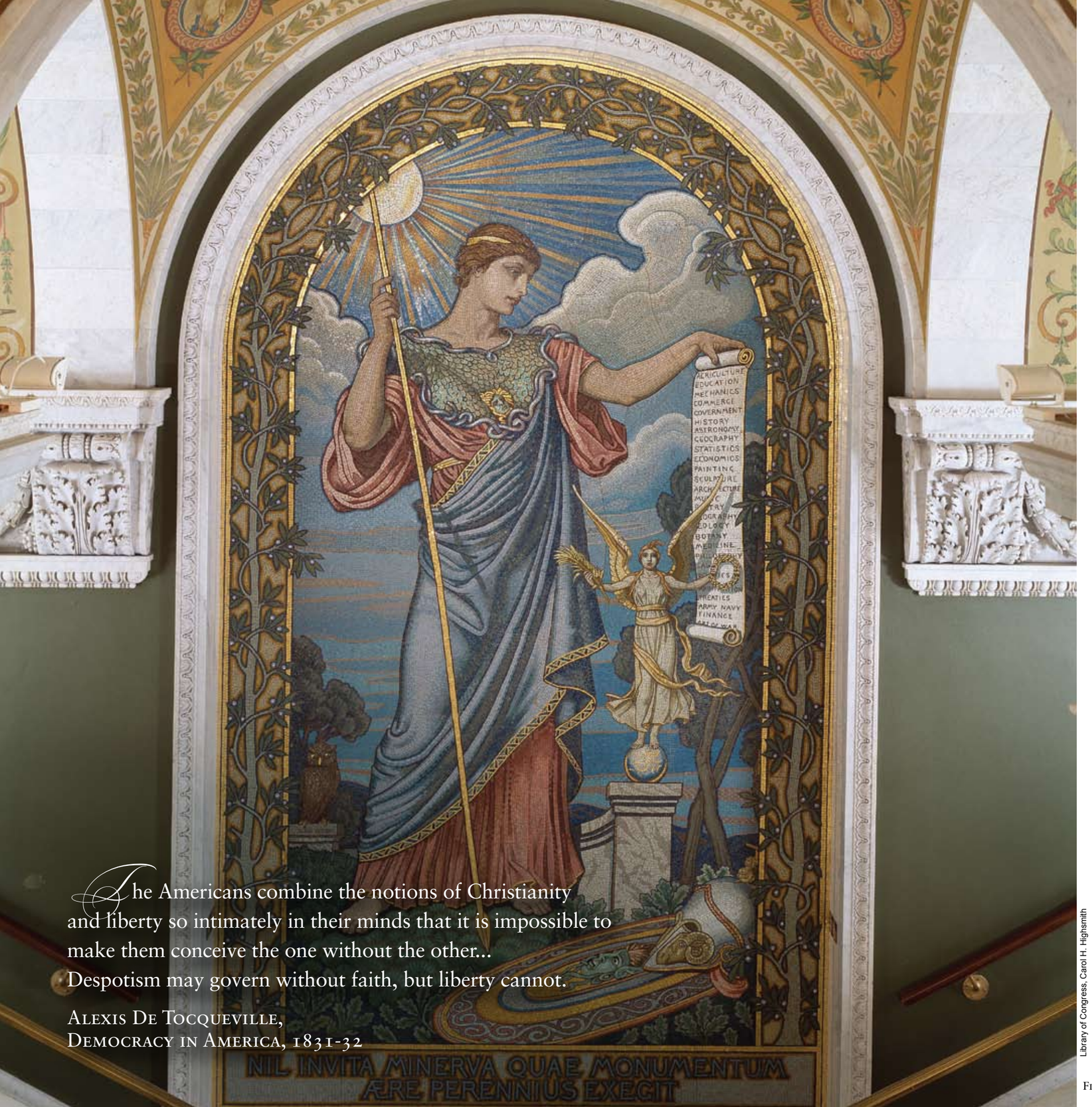
Family dissolution, depersonalization, and anomie were the symptoms of traditions that were being processed through some kind of social-economic Cuisinart. Contrasting this with scenes from Arcadia tells us what's being lost, what we yearn for, and what we need for a human life.

Family life today is nothing like that being depicted in the largest lunette [Fig. 6]. Grandparents would be in their own home or a nursing home. Who returns home to be greeted by spouse and children? Most often it is empty, children are engaged in their extracurricular activities, and parents are working and always running late. There's little time to be together. Everyone is too busy to have a family life like that of Arcadia. It's a tradition we no longer seem able to afford. But what's the price?

There's a balance of life portrayed in these paintings [Fig. 32]. Again, the Renaissance view of what it means to live a fully human life is being articulated. It requires a proper balance in the major aspects of life: family, work, study, religion, recreation, and rest. Each picture offers an opportunity for personal reflection.

Fig. 32

Brian Baugh



Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 33

The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other... Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot.

Alexis De Tocqueville,
Democracy in America, 1831-32

Part IV
Minerva

Western Civilization

Western civilization is fundamentally a marriage of two traditions: Athens and Jerusalem or Reason and Faith. That is, we have come to know ourselves, our world, our destiny, and our moral code through reason, logic, experiment, and divine revelation.

This was seen more clearly in the 1950s when the Gutenberg Bible, now on the first floor, was also exhibited on the balustrade opposite the stairs leading to Minerva. But the theme's still illustrated in [Fig. 31] where one book represents the bible (Faith) and the other knowledge (Reason) are being cast into an abyss.

Faith and Reason were always understood to be complementary in the Western tradition and not contradictory. This doesn't deny the fact that the marriage has had a stormy history. Yet it continues to be a powerful dynamic in American culture. No divorce seems in sight. So, unsurprisingly, it finds expression in various parts of the Library.

Look at the pillar of science in the main reading room [Fig. 58]. The inscription, which can't be read from the visitor's gallery, reads: "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God and the Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork." The biblically minded America of the early 20th century would readily recognize this as Psalm 19. For them, Faith and Reason (science and our democratic institutions) were not and could not be incompatible. It's what amazed Alexis de Tocqueville (see quote) in his visit to America.

Minerva and Athena: One in the same

This mosaic [Fig. 33] is the center piece of the Library in that all the paintings, sculptures, and architecture, like spokes to a hub, relate to it. Minerva is the Latin name for the Greek Athena; Athens derives its name from Athena. But why did Elihu Vedder paint a Minerva and why here?

She was the goddess of wisdom and protector of civilization. She holds a banner in one hand listing all the sciences and arts that make for civilization. The other hand holds a spear symbolizing a dual reality: civilization was brought about by force and the necessity of always being prepared to defend civilization with force.

Libraries dating to the late Renaissance would be organized according to a medieval classification. These were the seven liberal arts divided into the Trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the Quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

Painted figures (Cover: History; Back cover: Lyrica) or even personages such as Cicero or Aristotle were used to represent these subjects and their respective location in a library. Minerva has a similar function. As the goddess of wisdom and defender of knowledge, she has become the symbol for the whole intellectual side of human life. Minerva combines all the arts and sciences and therefore takes the central artistic position in the Library.

Her scroll contains a list of the modern sciences of the 19th century as well as some of the traditional liberal arts. Vedder also included the names of three congressional committees: Agriculture, Finance, and Army and Navy.

Yet Minerva or Athena stands for much more. First, civilization and prosperity are hard won achievements. The sun shines and peace reigns because the forces of destruction, corruption, and disorder whether from within or without were crushed. The armaments and shield now lay on the ground. The symbol of Victory, the figure on the globe, represents the triumph of order over irrationality and humanity's ability to forge its own destiny.

But eternal vigilance and a willingness to protect civilization even with violence is still necessary. Minerva's spear is pointed at both ends and she still wears the breast plate with the snakes and Medusa's head, symbol of divine powers, that turns any enemy into stone when faced with it.

Second, Athena was conceived by the Greeks as a benevolent goddess. In contrast to the wily Zeus and his revengeful wife, Hera, and in contrast to the

Fig. 34 Brian Baugh

fearful gods of the Orient, Athena served the best interests of humanity. This was a remarkably new way of conceiving man's relationship with a god.

The Latin inscription below her: *Nil Invita Minerva Quae Monumentum Aere Perennius Exegit,* is excerpted from Horace. It's difficult to translate into meaningful English never mind out of context. Literally it says: "Minerva not unwillingly erects a monument more lasting than bronze." Bronze is the symbol for eternity. But the saying doesn't carry much emotional or intellectual punch for a modern reader. Perhaps the artist was simply referring to the Library itself.

What this would have meant to the Greeks or Romans was that civilization can't exist without the good will and protection of the gods, specifically, Athena. She was also known at Delphi as Athena Pronoia. Pronoia means divine providence, foresight, foreseeing, planning, and is the root of the English word prognosis.

So the translation refers to civilization as an eternal monument to the goddess that protects it. In other words, it's a symbol of Western civilization's belief in Divine Providence and is so expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

The Life of Man:

In descending the stairs from Minerva [Fig. 34] that led to the Visitor's Gallery, one reenters the east corridor. In the ceiling above, running parallel to the Minerva mosaic, one is startled by sayings emphasizing the brevity, vulnerability, and finality of human life. This theme comes from the Moirae of Greek mythology: Atropos, Clotho, and Lachesis. We know them as the Fates.

These were three sisters who regulated the life of each individual by a thread: Clotho spun the thread, Lachesis measured it out (destiny), and Atropos (death) cut it [Fig. 37]. The Fates and Father Time [Fig. 70], located in the Main Reading Room, are Classical and Renaissance themes.

Greco-Roman myths make many valid statements about the human condition, human existence, and human relationships. What we are seeing here is a fictitious story in paint that illustrates a truth: the mortality of man. Mortal, yes, but with a potential, a destiny, for greatness. It's been a basic theme in Western civilization's first written works: the Hebrew Bible and Homer.

The Pompeiian Panels:

The major paintings on the second floor are the eight Pompeiian Panels located on the East [Fig. 35] and West [Fig. 36] Corridor walls. Each set of paintings flank a window: **Justice and Fortitude; Patriotism and Courage; Prudence and Temperance; Industry and Concordia.**

The Roman themes of republicanism permeate this building. The Romans incorporated Greek art, architecture, and sculpture, which deceives some into thinking that the Library as well as other Washington monuments are modeled after the Greeks bespeaking of Greek democracy. This is not the case. In fact, Jefferson didn't think all that highly of Plato and Aristotle, but looked to the Roman world for political lessons.

The Pompeiian figures are Roman, modeled after the wall paintings discovered in the excavated Roman villas of Pompeii. (The red came from the heavy and abundant iron content in the soil used for creating the frescoes.) But more importantly, the virtues are of Roman origin.

Four of these virtues: Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and Prudence, are known as the classical cardinal virtues. The other four: Patriotism, Courage, Industry, and Concordia, are purely American.

But the Greeks also emphasized the importance of virtue in maintaining their democracy. Their word for virtue was *sophrosune* and referred to the virtues of discretion, temperance, and self-control.

The ancient Greek belief can be summarized as follows: Just as the physical world is governed by certain laws or rules that can be expressed mathematically, so too, there are rules for the social order that can be expressed by virtues. In other words, there were both physical and moral natural laws.

The message in the Library is simple. Unless a critical mass of the citizenry develop and possess the virtues of Justice, Fortitude, Patriotism, Courage, Prudence, Temperance, Industry, and Concordia, America will not prosper.

The strength of a nation lies first and foremost in its character. That content of character is determined by the degree to which its citizens and leaders possess and exercise virtue. In a Republic, the government is rarely more virtuous than the people it governs.

Figs. 35 & 36 Brian Baugh

Religion vs. Virtue:

We quite readily associate virtue with religion. But for the Romans, virtue was derived from philosophy and not religion. Religion and religious practices were between man and his gods.

Virtue, on the other hand, was derived from philosophy and addressed relationships between men. It addressed the kind of behaviors needed to maintain social harmony, peaceful coexistence, and the protection of civilization. The American Founders referred to these as civic virtues.

Roman culture expected virtue from its citizens, leaders, and society as a whole. The family was responsible for inculcating and enforcing them. The concept of Roman citizenship was seen as an extension of the family with the responsibility to promote, support, and reward virtue among its members. This is another meaning of the first floor murals in the North Corridor dedicated to the family as the cornerstone of society and social order [Figs. 6, 32].

It would be a blind historical eye to ignore the role of Christian religion in American life during the 18th and 19th centuries. Most Americans believed that the source and motivating force for the practice of virtue was based in a belief in God.

In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson stated that belief (Although it is questionable as to whether he believed it himself.) when he wrote: "Can the liberties of our nation be thought secure when we have removed their only fixed foundation, namely, that they are a gift of God?"

The Graces:

The three beautiful paintings in the middle of the south corridor are called the Graces. The mythology originally had more. Nevertheless, they are usually taken in combination and stand for beauty and graciousness.

Greek mythology is a statement about human nature. In the case of the Graces, they personify the kinds of manners that society requires for smooth functioning. Social order is fragile and can readily explode into violence, vicious violence. The human can be a very dangerous and violent being as current world events attest.

Manners were a means of fostering social harmony and order. The formal practices of courtesy, respect, and politeness are what make social interaction possible and productive. Community harmony and social order doesn't occur spontaneously, but strife does.

The fundamental habits of saying: "please, thank you, excuse me, turning off the cell phone, etc. are the social lubricants that reduce the frictions of social intercourse. But these are not to be done in some sterile fashion. They were to be imbued with the spirit of good will, joyfulness, good humor, and graciousness. The Graces represent the spirit—respect of the person—behind the contemporary forms or local customs considered to be good manners.

Edmund Burke, one of the greatest political thinkers of the 18th century, argued that stable government depends on deeply ingrained habits, not the force of law. In Letter I: On the Overtures for Peace, he wrote:

> Manners are more important than laws. Upon them in a great measure the laws depend. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in.

These three sisters were known as: Aglaia, spirit of good will; Thalia [Fig. 38], spirit of joyfulness; and Euphrosyne, spirit of graciousness and beauty. They are readily recognized with their respective symbols: a shepherd's crook, a lyre, and a mirror. The symbols connote sensitivity to vulnerability, care, protection, harmony, concord, unity, and truth. These are values necessary for good social order.

The lesson of the Graces is to take human nature seriously. Strife can readily erupt out of human interaction when people feel maltreated, misunderstood, and disrespected. Manners become the guard rails for social interactions. Their purpose is to promote good will among people and to preserve respect between them. Manners are essentially habits, the little virtues that help people to get along.

Brian Baugh

Fig. 37

Beauty is truth, truth is beauty.

John Keats:
Ode on a Grecian Urn

The Graces performed that function by alerting society that good form (manners) fosters good will, harmony, unity, and peace. On the other hand, bad form (manners) precipitates conflict, disorder, and violence. Bad form is the result of too much casualness in the public square, and casualness deteriorates into indifference, and indifference deteriorates into disrespect, and disrespect generates strife and violence.

When society no longer uses "please," and " thank you," and "excuse me," pushing and shoving is soon to follow.

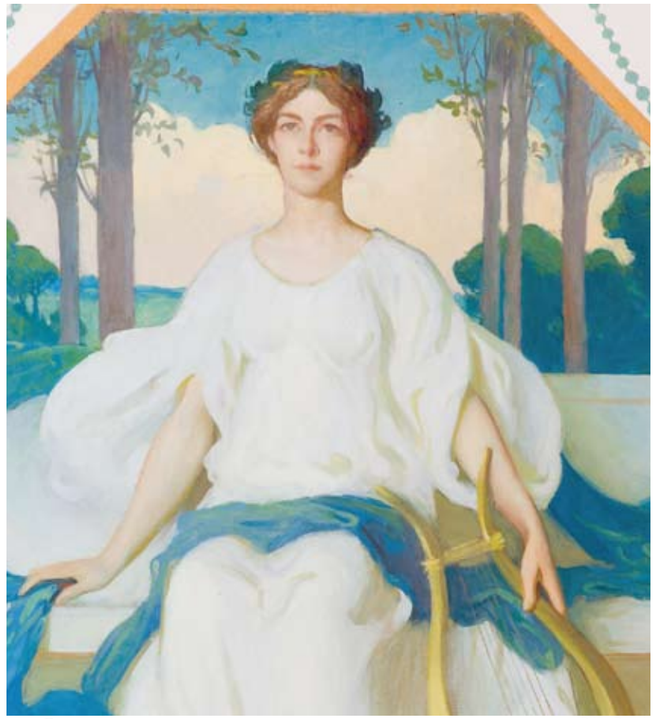


Fig. 38 Brian Baugh

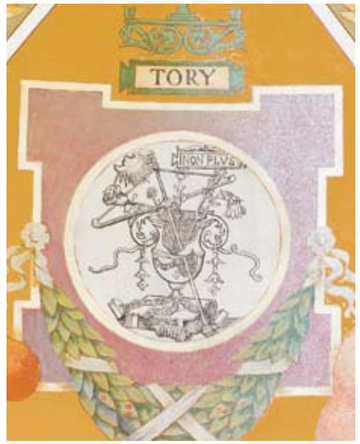


Fig. 39 Brian Baugh

Printers' Marks:

Fifty-six Printers' Marks form a decorative scheme throughout the second floor corridors [Figs. 23, 25]. This is a library and authenticated printed books and various documents are integral to it. The marks originally assured that what was being printed was indeed the work of the author. Like a good housekeeping seal of approval, the printer's mark validated the contents of the book for the buyer.

The west corridor has German printers; the south, French; the east, Italian and Spanish; and the north, has English, Scottish and American. Each had their own distinguishing design. Some marks were straight forward, some comical, and some very touching.

The one pictured here was designed by Geoffrey Tory in 1524 [Fig. 39]. He was the royal printer to Francis I of France. He was shattered by the loss of his young daughter. The broken vase symbolizes a life cut short. The book on the table indicated her love of books, and the other objects were what she treasured in this life. *Non Plus* above the cup summarizes his loss.

Brian Baugh

Fig. 40

Part V

Under The Dome

Main Reading Room

This is the most important part of the Library both functionally and artistically. Its importance is conveyed by the abundance of magnificent works of architecture, sculpture, ornamentation, and paintings centered here.

Appropriately, the Main Reading Room is not accessible to visitors. The only view is from a specially designed Visitor's Gallery accessible by the stairways adjacent to the great mosaic of Minerva in the Great Hall [Fig. 34]. The view is beautiful yet incomparable to being in the room itself.

The Reading Room, a Pantheon prodigy, is in the shape of an octagon with eight columns or pillars that symbolize the foundations of Western civilization. Each column is identified by a beautiful female figure or goddess. Her beauty personifies a major truth about civilized life. The diagram below identifies the pillars and objects of art.

Above each goddess there is a quotation related to that aspect of civilization. (The quotations were selected by Charles W. Elliot, president of Harvard.) Flanking every column are two human size bronze sculptures of persons considered to be representative of Western civilization's achievement in that area.

This is the inner sanctum of the Library. The architecture with its eight Corinthian columns supporting a massive entablature (the cornice, frieze, and architrave) speaks very forcibly to the historical memory of a sacred place, a temple [Fig. 40].

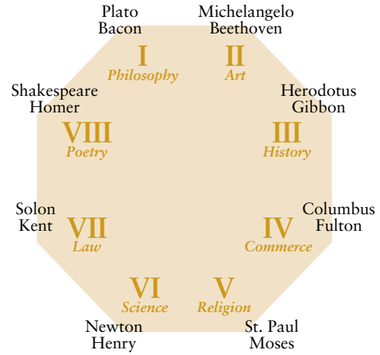
It is here where the work of reason, reflection, the search for knowledge, and understanding transpires. The word reason is derived from the Latin *ratio* that was rooted in the Greek logos meaning both word and thought. Plato referred to the divine mind or pure intelligence as the Logos, a concept seized upon by Christian Renaissance scholars.

For the Romans and Greeks, geometrical and mathematical relationships imbued everything. But with the moving of the center of the Roman Empire by Constantine in 325 AD from Rome to Constantinople, Rome entered a period of decline and architectural decay.

It wasn't until the Renaissance that Rome's architectural and artistic productions were rediscovered. By then Athens was under the rule of the Ottomans and that precluded access to studying the ancient Greek works.

Consequently, the Renaissance architects and artists drew more upon the Romans as their basic models for architectural and artistic endeavors. And with the Renaissance's discovery of the mathematics of perspective, they have provided the world with unparalleled architecture and art.

But our focus is not on aesthetics. It's about the wisdom of Western civilization handed down to us in art form. Classical architecture and art is like a Greek drama. It speaks to us about ourselves. And it is to that story we turn.



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Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.

Benjamin Franklin

The Corinthian Columns:

The Corinthian columns or pillars of civilization represent the foundational supports upon which Western civilization has been built [Fig. 41]. Religion, Commerce, History, Art, Philosophy, Poetry, Law, and Science stand as independent fields of wisdom, knowledge, and human endeavors. They certainly exist in other civilizations, but in the West no single one exercises total control over the other no matter how much they try.

Classical architects and artists had a keen sense of how form could animate function as well as serve it. Anything extraneous to that purpose was superfluous and therefore had to be restrained from being expressed.

Western civilization likewise depends upon restraint or else it implodes into chaos and violence. Western history offers plenty of tragic lessons in that regard. So an architecture of restraint is an excellent means of artistically expressing the ideal character for which Western civilization strives.

Idealism is embedded in the very material of this room: marble. Marble is pure, homogeneous, and without defect. The Corinthian columns and their piers are sheathed and veneered in Algerian marble and rest upon a base of veneered Tennessee marble. The screens of Ionic columns and arches between them—symbols of achievement—are made from solid Siena marble [Fig. 41].

These Corinthian columns and piers support the entablature with its frieze of winged youth before urns and torches. Memory and the light of reason are central to Western culture and its development. They are the sources of insight and wisdom, some of which are verbally expressed in the sayings above each goddess.

But an overall theme must first be presented before describing each of these and their respective statutes in detail. The concepts of excellence, achievement, and discipline permeate everything in this room. The theme that embraces all these concepts is restraint.

Self-Restraint:

The Achilles' heel of America is the virtue of self-restraint. It's an absolute necessity for success in life whether for an individual or a nation. There can be no excellence, achievement or self-discipline without it.

Western civilization's greatest gift to humanity is economic freedom, political freedom, and personal freedom. It's characterized by minimal government, rule of law, individual rights, freedom of association, and freedom of conscience. It's called liberal democracy.

In America, our differences have always been over the best means of achieving the ends of liberal democracy and never about replacing it. In Europe, by contrast, the very concept of liberal democracy until recently was challenged by Marxism, Socialism, Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism. In other parts of the world it was challenged by Maoism and Communism, and more recently, by Islamic radicalism and terrorism.

Yet liberal democracy has its own internal conflicts. First, economic, political, and personal freedoms by their very nature generate myriad interests, goals, beliefs, and lifestyles. And in a population of 304 million people an inevitable clash of interests, goals, religious beliefs, political views, consciences, and lifestyles will occur.

Second, the dynamics of liberal democracy's economic, political, and personal freedoms perpetually seek emancipation from restraints. For liberal democracy has a natural tendency to war against limits.

But no civilization can exist without limits and an ordering force. The prevailing view until 1776 was that people can't be trusted. In the words of Machiavelli, "people are fickle, greedy, selfish, and live only for the advantage of the moment."

The great experiment in self-government, however, assumes a certain degree of virtue among the people, namely, self-restraint. This is a civic virtue that includes a respect for the rule of law and civility. The alternatives are disorder and violence or martial law.

The Pillars of Civilization:

Resting upon each column's entablature is a female figure, e.g. Law [Fig. 42]. She holds symbols and/or is positioned in a way that represents her unique pillar of civilization. Above each figure is an inscription. In conjunction with the statutes beneath her, everything exemplifies the foundations and beliefs upon which Western civilization has been built. And for the most part they speak for themselves.

Each statute that flanks a column represents a major area of achievement and progress from ancient and pre-modern to modern Western civilization. The concept of achievement, also symbolized by the arches between the columns, and progress are the fundamental message.

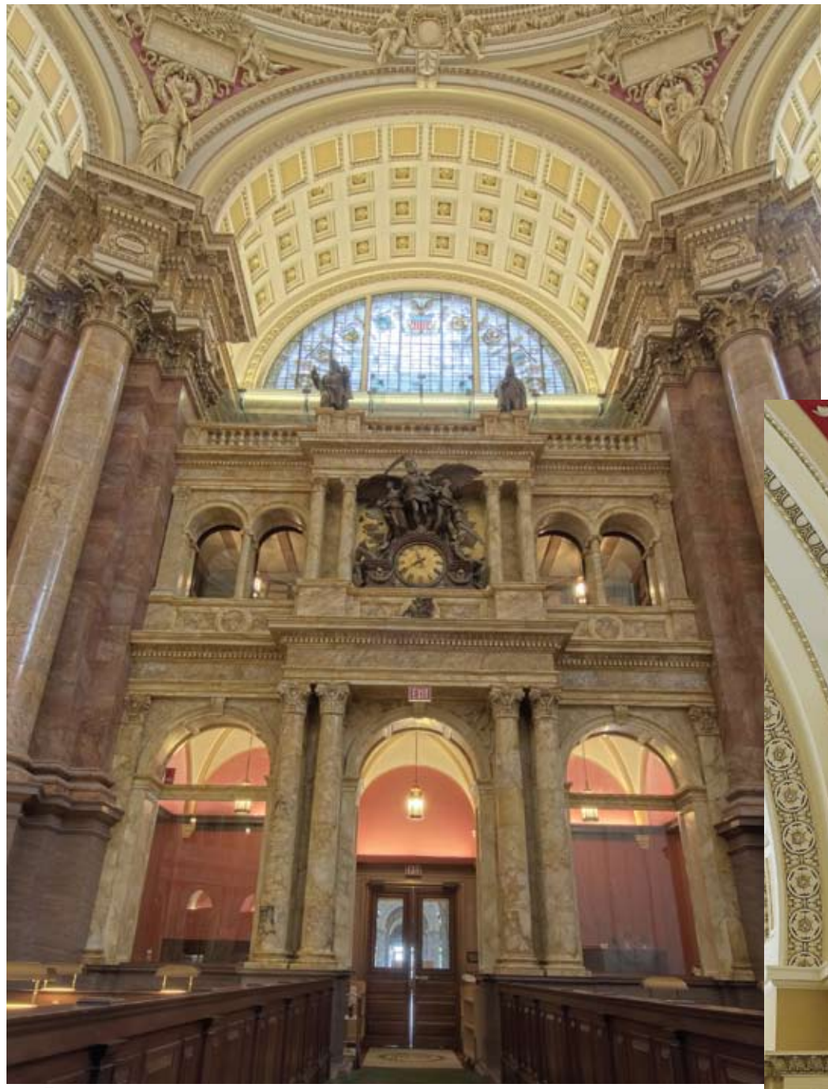

Fig. 41 Brian Baugh

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 42

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Fig. 43

1. Philosophy: Plato and Bacon [Figs. 44, 45]

Today we make a clear distinction between philosophy and science. But in the history of Western civilization this is a relatively new distinction. Until the late 19th century natural philosophy always embraced science, which refers to a body of knowledge. What characterizes modern science, however, is its emphasis on the scientific method as the chief if not the only means of acquiring knowledge.

Yet the scientific method, as powerful and successful as it is, is not the only means to knowledge and wisdom. For as the American Richard Feynman remarked in his Nobel Laureate acceptance speech in physics: "a great deal more truth can become known than can be proven."

Plato

(427?-347 BC), student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle, followed the pre-Socratic natural philosophers. Their major gift to Western civilization was to seek natural instead of divine explanations for the world around them. Lacking superconducting super colliders, they relied upon their best wits for answers, such as earth, air, fire, and water as the basic constituents of all matter.

But Socrates and Plato were more interested in how humans and human societies were put together than the planet. They wanted to know "what course of life was best" and what kind of social order, state, best allows a person to pursue that course. And here we find the beginning of Western political science based on reason and human nature rather than divine revelation.

Plato's most famous work was the Republic *(Politeia)*, which continues to exercise influence on Western political thought. In it discussions occur regarding the best form of government, which directly led to other questions about the nature of justice and the virtues necessary for political order such as courage, and moderation.

We still debate them today. No other civilization in the world either thought this way or entrusted government to the rule of the people. It's an inheritance not to be forgotten. The other part of that inheritance that sets Western civilization apart from all others was the freedom of its citizens to criticize their own government.

Francis Bacon

(1561-1626) rebelled against the current Aristotelian educational system. He said it was too theoretical and didn't add an iota to bettering the conditions of mankind. What was needed was practical knowledge that would result in more and better food, housing, and health. And the only way to discover this was through experiment consisting of observation and practical reasoning.

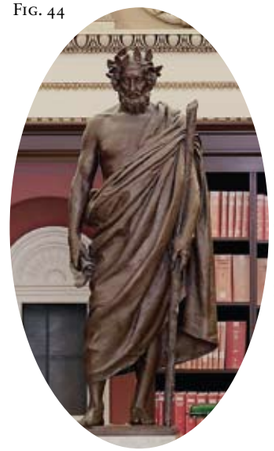
He noticed that one of the great draw backs was in us. "Man," he said, "prefers to believe what he prefers to be true." To counter that tendency he introduced and emphasized what we now call the scientific method. Only that which can be demonstrated to be true can be considered true.

Bacon also introduced the concept of progress in history. Knowledge drives technological improves that in turn improves and makes for a better life in this world. To ameliorate the conditions of humankind was well within our power.

History as progressive instead of cyclical became a secular faith that inspired optimism. And that optimism was inherited and fully embraced by Americans in contrast to the cultural pessimism of the Old World.

Philosophy's face is the gravest of all the goddesses, a name given to represent perfection and an ideal state. Her eyes are downcast and she carries a book in her hand. The inscription above her [Fig. 43] is from Bacon: Essays, "Of Truth"

Fig. 44



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Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence, and poverty the parent of meanness and viciousness, and both of discontent.

Plato,
The Republic

Fig. 45

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Nothing does more hurt in a state than that cunning men pass for wise.

Francis Bacon

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 46

II. Art: Michelangelo and Beethoven [Figs. 47, 48]

Michelangelo and Beethoven are among a small group of artists in the history of the world whose mastery of their arts were able to express the deepest feelings of our humanity.

Michelangelo Buonarotti

(1475-1564) was a sculptor, painter, poet, and architect. There's no better figure to symbolize the Library's own perfect integration of architecture, sculpture, and painting.

At age 25 he sculpted the Pietà. It was the only work he ever signed, which he did in a fit of anger. Apparently, he overheard a visitor attributing his work to another artist. That evening he quickly carved a sash across Mary's breast inscribed with the words: MICHAEL-AGELUS-BONAROTUS-FLORENTIN-FACIEBAT (Made by the Florentine Michelangelo Buonarotti.) After that there never was any doubt.

Then there was David completed by age 29. It was a politically charged work. Placed before the Palazzo della Signoria, Florence, also the seat of Florence's republican spirit, it faced south toward Rome. It was a warning that the Florentines could do to Rome, i.e., the Pope, what it did to the Medici, throw him out.

Michelangelo was finally enticed to return to Rome where he completed the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at age 37. But the largest fresco the world has ever seen, the Last Judgment, would not be undertaken and completed until many years later. He was 66. And at age 71 he became the architect of St. Peter's Basilica for which he refused any compensation.

For Michelangelo beauty revealed truths. The most profound truth was about God. And beauty was the way God communicated with humanity.

Michelangelo, following a practice of the ancients who saw nudity as a form of spiritual beauty, used the male nude as his chief form of expression. Nudity at the time was frowned upon, especially for religious art, but Michelangelo insisted on it. As he said: "What spirit is so empty and blind that it cannot recognize the fact that the foot is more noble than the shoe and the skin more beautiful than the garment with which it is clothed?"

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827), a true child prodigy, gave his first public performance as a pianist at the age of eight. America in the midst of a Revolutionary war had its mind on other matters. By age 25 he had acquired renown as a pianist and for his brilliant improvisations. This gave him entry to and acceptance among the nobility who were an important and necessary source of patronage for an artist without personal wealth.

Beethoven became aware in the early 1800s that his incremental hearing loss would become total and permanent. It was a momentous crisis in his life, overwhelming him with depression and suicidal ideation. But he ultimately responded with a furious determination.

Eroica (heroic) and Symphonies 5, 6, 7, and 8 among other works marked this period of his life and established him as the greatest composer of his time. But his piano playing days were finished by 1808 and confirmed by a disaster due to his deafness at a charity appearance in 1814.

He was again battling depression and struggling if not agonizing in his compositions. Yet amazingly some of his best and profoundest music were written at this time. Its power no doubt came from his own excruciating internal struggles. At the conclusion of his première of the Choral Symphony no. 9, he had to be turned around to face the thunderous ovation by the audience. But hearing nothing, he began to weep and so did the audience..

"Art!" said Beethoven, "Who comprehends her? With whom can one consult concerning this great goddess?" This goddess, unlike the others, is presented as nearly nude with a crown of laurel signifying achievement [Fig. 46]. In one hand she holds a model of the Parthenon and beside her in the branches of a tree hangs a sculptor's mallet and a palette and brush of the painter. Her inscription comes from the American poet, James Russell Lowell: Yussouf.

Fig. 47

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Help save my pictures and good name, since I'm so badly off and painting is my shame.

Michelangelo:
"On Painting The Sistine Chapel"

Fig. 48

Brian Baugh

I want to seize fate by the throat.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 49

III. *History:* Herodotus and Gibbon [Figs. 50, 51]

Herodotus (484?-425? BC) is commonly known as the father of history. History comes from the Greek word 'istoria meaning to learn by inquiry, i.e. research. Herodotus wanted to know how things came about, who did what to whom, why, when and where. Part of the inquiry was to discover evidence, facts, upon which he could formulate conclusions.

His inquiries were about the Achaemenid (Persian) empire. It was the most powerful empire in his known world, but ultimately defeated by a group of small Greek city-states in the Bay of Salamis in 480 BC. His works are called The Histories consisting of 9 books. Each book was a scroll consisting of three parts *(logoi)*. Books were read to others and it took four hours to read one part.

Herodotus modeled his writings after Homer, the greatest writer of the time. But there was one important difference that would become a hallmark of the Western mind. While Homer in the very first line of the Iliad calls upon the goddess Thea for inspiration, Herodotus makes no such appeal.

He simply states that he is going to create a record of the past and show how the two races came into conflict. There was no appeal to a god for assistance. The Greek mindset was to look for natural and eschew divine explanations of the world.

The Histories were the first attempt to base history and historical analysis on direct human observation and verification by others. Herodotus concluded that the fundamental conflict between the West (Greeks) and the East (Persians) was a conflict between two cultures: one of freedom and the other of tyranny, a conclusion often heard today.

What remains important, however, is that Herodotus initiated a new way of thinking—natural explanations based on observation—of which we are the heirs.

Fig. 50

Brian Baugh

Men trust their ears less than their eyes.

The Histories of Herodotus, Bk. I

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794): It's been said that to be a good historian one must be able to write well. On this criterion alone, Edward Gibbon ranks among the greatest.

And so the West inherited his six volume work: The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Gibbon undertook his educational rite of passage called the Grand Tour of Europe at age 25. This was an expectation for a wealthy and well-educated young Englishman. The goal was to visit the cultural centers of Europe and the hot spots of the Renaissance and classical antiquity. It lasted 22 months.

Arriving in Rome, Gibbon spent days strolling through the ruins of a once but now dead empire. He wondered: "How could a great civilization, an empire, implode? What caused it? And will the same thing happen to us?"

Yet his real subject matter was human nature, us, and he had a lot to say about it. His most quoted comment: "History...is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind," seems to delight listeners. But the quote hardly does justice to his grasp of the complexity of human nature.

He wrote about the virtue of patriotism. It consisted of an understanding and commitment to the common good as the only means of preserving individual freedom. This was the sentiment that made the legions of the Roman republic almost invincible. But when that cultural fabric slowly and incrementally started to deteriorate, the consequences were inevitable.

Gibbon believed that peace and prosperity created a paradox. They fostered self-indulgence, self-interest, softness, and an unwillingness to sacrifice for the republic, *respublica*, which means the common good. Those were the kinds of vices that in the end destroy peace and prosperity.

The goddess of History holds a book in one hand and a mirror facing backwards that reflects the past [Fig. 49]. Her inscription clearly suggests a linear and progressive movement of history to some final end.

One God, One Law, One Element, and One Far-Off Divine Event,
To Which the Whole Creation Moves
Tennyson, In Memoriam

Fig. 51

Brian Baugh

History... undertakes to record the transaction of the past, for the instruction of future ages.

Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chapter 16

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Fig. 52

VI. Commerce: Columbus and Fulton [Figs. 53, 54]

Christopher Columbus

(1446?-1506) and a hundred men sailed forth from the Port of Palos, Spain, 3 August 1492, in tiny ships: the Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Niña. Ten weeks later he set foot on land—convinced that he found a better trade route to the Far East—and named it San Salvador (a Bahamian island, perhaps today's Plana Cays). It was the first of his four voyages to a new world.

When Christoforo Colombo departed in the service of the King and Queen of Spain, he was no neophyte. Sailing the seas since he was ten years old, he was an experienced and skillful navigator and convinced that the earth was round, not flat. He was a man of determination, steadfastness, boldness, religious convictions, and courage with a good touch of arrogance and bravado.

In this Age of European discovery Columbus was one among many great navigators of the time. But the difference between him and the great Portuguese navigators (Prince Henry, King John II, Dias, Vasco da Gamma, etc.) was that they went South and then East hugging the cost of Africa for trade, trading posts, and riches. Columbus went West straight into an open, often violent, and unknown sea in the service of Spain.

Spanish America had a hundred year jump on the other European powers. And it initiated the so called Columbian Exchange: The Europeans introduced horses (the first one came with Columbus) and received potatoes and maze. In addition to a vast exchange of people, animals, and plants, there was disease. And European diseases, which no one understood, decimated the native American populations.

Whatever critique one wants to make of Columbus and the ruthless characters that overshadowed the nobler that followed him, Christian, Western civilization was implanted in the New World for good. Other European powers, the French, Dutch, and English, would soon follow. It was the beginning of a movement to one world and a global economy.

Fig. 53

Brian Baugh

Thanks be to God, the air is soft as in April in Seville, and it is a pleasure to be in it, so fragrant it is.

Columbus,
Journal of the First Voyage,
8-10-1492

Robert Fulton

(1765-1815) adds the American character of innovation, ingenuity, practicality, and industriousness to Western civilization. America was growing from bottom up.

The most lasting effect of the American Revolution was not that it created 13 independent colonies, but that it ripped out the cornerstone of its inherited hierarchy and patriarchy that continued to characterize the Old World. Prosperity, safety, and well-being would be the work and responsibility of Americans not that of a king, governor, aristocrat, or even a president.

Robert Fulton started off painting portraits, landscapes, and making mechanical and architectural drawings. He was also mechanically gifted; at the age of 13 he had constructed paddlewheels to be used on fishing boats.

In 1786, his father sent him to England to study painting under Benjamin West. But Fulton's painting interests soon gave way to the mechanical sciences of engineering, mathematics, chemistry, and mechanical design.

Rivers and canals became America's first continental highways of commerce in the world's first continental free trade zone. Commercial growth was all about speed, the fastest way to get something done. Technology like today drove advancements.

In partnership with Robert Livingston, one of the Founding Fathers, he proceeded to build the North River Steamboat, later called the Clermont. The great test took place 17 August 1807 on the Hudson. A world record was established: 32 hours from New York to Albany. America was off and running; the age of speed had begun.

The goddess of Commerce holds a model of a Yankee schooner in one hand and a locomotive in her left [Fig. 52]. The saying above her illustrates all the advantages to humanity derived from the free exchange of goods and services and free trade.

We Taste the Spices of Arabia Yet Never Feel
The Scorching Sun Which Brings Them Forth.
Anon. [Dudley North, East India Trade]

Fig. 54

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Throughout my whole way, both going and returning, the wind was ahead, no advantage could be derived from my sails, the whole has, therefore, been performed by the power of the steam engine.

Robert Fulton,
17 August 1807

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Fig. 55

V. Religion: St. Paul and Moses [Figs. 56, 57]

Moses

(late 13th to early 12th century BC): At the time when Moses was born in Egypt, the Pharaoh had issued an order to drown all the new born male children of the Israelites. Moses' parents hid him in a basket in the Nile River and orchestrated matters in such a way that Pharaoh's daughter rescued him. He was entrusted to a Hebrew nurse until an age when he could be more formally educated in the ways of the Egyptians.

Moses had great sympathy for his fellow tribesmen and was angered by the terrible ways they were being abused by Egyptians. One day he killed an Egyptian for mistreating a fellow Hebrew. The Pharaoh discovered this and Moses had to flee for his life.

Moses wandered the lands for 40 years as a shepherd during which time God revealed Himself to Moses in the form of a burning bush. God then directed him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into Canaan, a land of freedom. In the course of that journey, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. (He is portrayed in the statue holding a tablet.) Finally, due to a failure of faith in God, Moses is prevented from entering the promise land of Jerusalem.

This rough outline hardly captures the beauty of the narrative in the Book of Exodus. But the point is that throughout the story God is directly involved in the life of his chosen people. The covenant between God and the Israelites required that they be faithful to the one true God and have no false gods before them.

The belief in one God, monotheism, God's love, God's Law, the duty to obey it, and God's direct intervention into His creation to redeem mankind is often referred to as the gift of the Jews [Fig. 69]. Judaism and the Christianity that grew out of it became the core belief around which Western civilization developed and would eventually rebel against.

St. Paul

(AD 10?-67?) was born at Tarsus in Cilicia, southern Turkey, of a Jewish family of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Roman citizen, well educated in the scriptures, and known as a persecutor of Hellenistic Christians who had severed themselves from Judaism. But on the road to Damascus he relates how a vision of the risen Christ transformed his life.

From that point on, Paul passionately pursued a new mission of proclaiming Christ to the gentiles without regard for his personal safety or wellbeing. He never minced words and harshly condemned immorality and those who promoted it

He traveled several times across the Roman Empire and to Rome itself preaching, visiting, monitoring, correcting, and when necessary chastising the Christian communities. He was a prolific writer and often followed up with letters referred to as the Epistles of St. Paul. These writings have had a profound effect upon Christian believers and form an integral part of the New Testament.

For Paul, God is a God of love and it behooves us to act accordingly. He writes in 1 Corinthians 13 the best description yet of what it means to love one's neighbor. And he concludes: "And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

The figure representing Religion holds a flower in her hand [Fig. 55]. The suggestion, similar to the inscription above Science, is that we come to the awareness of God revealed through the beauty of nature. Her inscription is from the Holy Bible, Micah 6:8.

Fig. 56

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

And God created man in His own image, In the image of God created He him, Male and female created He them.

Genesis: 1:27

Fig. 57

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

St. Paul, I Corinthians: 13:1, King James Bible

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Fig. 58

VI. Science: Newton and Henry [Figs. 59, 60]

Sir Isaac Newton

(1642-1727) was born on the same day that Galileo was believed to have died. It conjured up an image of a relay race where the baton of scientific progress was handed off from Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, and then to Newton. But the transition took place in the same year not on the day.

Newton was simply a genius. Due to the plague, he had to leave London immediately upon graduation from Trinity College to the safety of the Countryside. He did some of his most creative work there.

When he returned to the University at age 25, he had already worked out the essentials of the three laws of motion and the law of gravity. He invented calculus as a means of solving the question: Why doesn't the moon come crashing down upon us?

Ever since the Greeks, Pythagoras in particular, discovered that mathematics could describe reality, the possibility followed that mathematics might also be able to discover realities unavailable to the naked eye. And now there was Newton's work with the driving concept of fixed immutable laws governing the universe.

If this was true for moving bodies like the earth and the planets, why not for other things of nature such as chemistry, biology and geology? And wouldn't there be similar laws to be discovered concerning economics and politics? Adam Smith and John Locke thought so.

These were heady times for enlightened thinkers. Newton marks the time of a radical intellectual change in how people thought about their world and their place in it. Perhaps there were fixed immutable laws that governed everything imaginable, even us.

Alexander Pope caught the spirit of the age when he wrote: "Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night: God said: 'Let Newton be!' And all was light." It made for a very intoxicating century called the Enlightenment.

Fig. 59

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

If I have seen further (than you and Descartes),
It is by standing upon the shoulders of Giants.

Sir Isaac Newton:
Letter to Robert Hooke
5 February 1675

Joseph Henry

(1797-1878) is the second of three Americans to be included among the sixteen exemplars of Western civilization. Like Robert Fulton he highlights America's contributions.

Henry's notable contributions were in the field of electromagnetism. He made the electromagnet stronger and more commercially viable.

Henry built one for Yale that would lift 2,300 pounds, a world record at the time. And his innovations with the electromagnetic telegraph formed the basis for the commercial telegraphic system. He discovered self-inductance, often called "the henry" in his honor. He was also known as the inventor of the electric motor and the father of daily weather forecasts.

Henry was self-educated and never graduated from college. But by stint of his own experiments, research, and inventions he received an appointment to teach natural philosophy (physics) at the College of New Jersey, now known as Princeton.

His successful career at Princeton led to his appointment among a very competitive group of applicants for the first Secretary (director) of the newly established Smithsonian Institute. There is another statue prominently displayed in front of the Smithsonian building commemorating him.

In 1852, Steven Douglas, who would eventually debate Abraham Lincoln, accused the Smithsonian, namely Henry, for wasting money on basic research instead of doing more practical work in agriculture. Henry responded that the criticism was valid only "if the highest cravings of the human soul were confined to the desire for good potatoes."

The conflict, however, between basic and applied science continues. But a true scholar of the Renaissance would know that they are just opposite sides of the same coin.

Science [Fig. 58] holds in one hand a globe with a triangle and in her right hand a mirror, pointed forward, unlike history's, symbolizing its goal of reflecting truth. Her inscription reads:

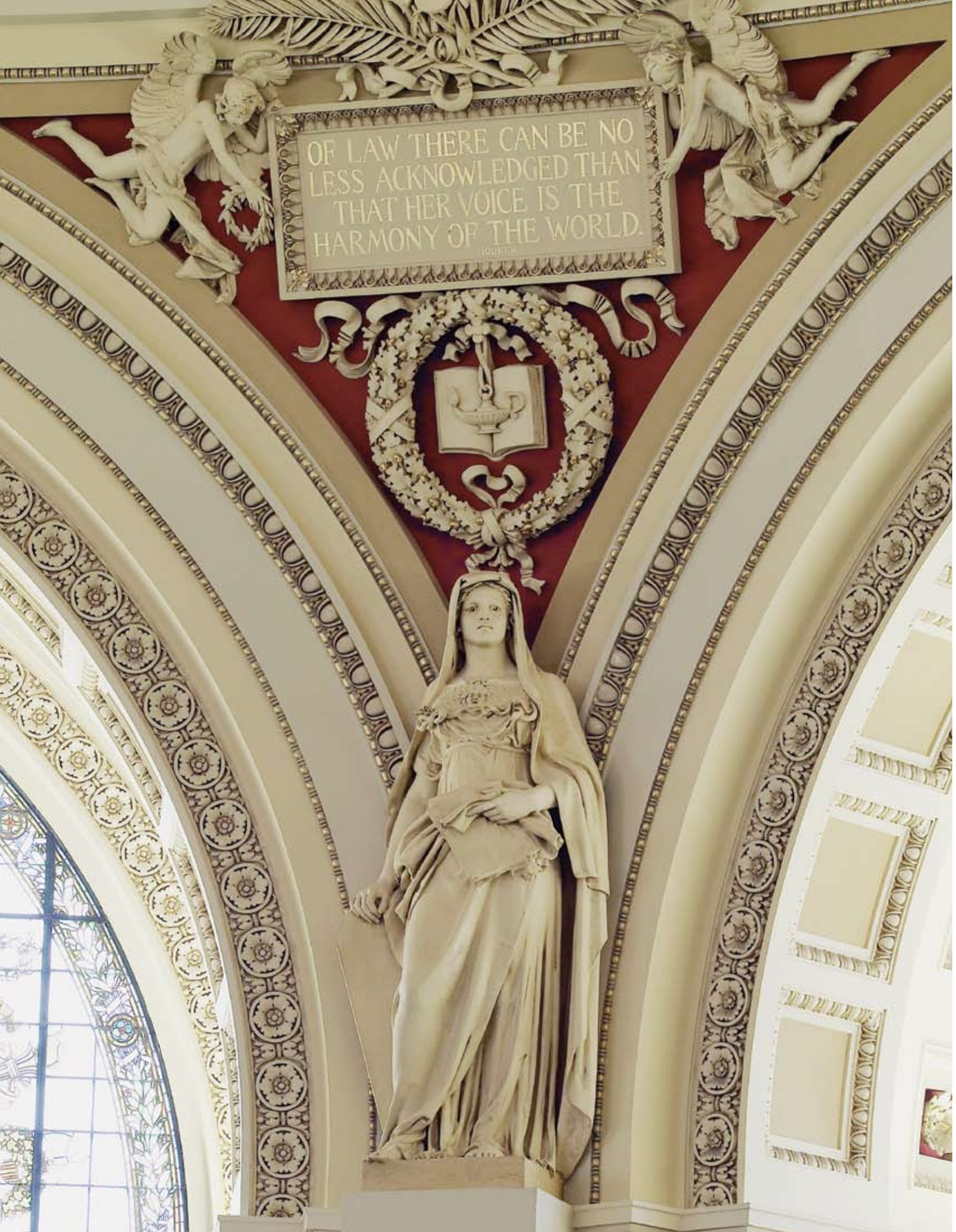
The Heavens Declare the Glory of God;
and the Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork.
Holy Bible, Psalms 19:1

Fig. 60

Brian Baugh

He has not lived in vain,
who leaves behind him a
child better educated morally,
intellectually, and physically
than himself.

Joseph Henry



Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 61

VII. Law: Solon and Kent [Figs. 62, 63]

Solon

(638-558 BC) was one of three archons (administrators) elected annually by the assembly of adult male citizens. By the year 570 Attica, Athens and the territory around it, was on the verge of civil war. The source of strife was an economic depression and debt that forced small farmers to mortgage their lands and themselves into slavery.

Solon was asked to solve the crisis and was deputized with the necessary powers to do so. His statute has him holding out a scroll with the words: *OI NOMOI* (The Laws). It symbolizes his contributions to Western civilization and his known reputation as lawgiver.

There were at least a hundred separate Greek city states with their own system of rule. Sparta and Athens are the most famous. Sparta was well known for its order and oligarchic rule.

Athens on the other hand had a history of living from one crisis to another. Out of those crises democracy would emerge as a solution to their political problems. At the time, most considered democracy to be contemptible and nothing more than mob rule.

Solon's reforms, albeit unwittingly, moved Athens along the conceptual path to democracy. His first step was to cancel all agricultural debts and release those at home and abroad from debt slavery.

Next, he passed constitutional reform. Citizens were divided into four classes based on their income from land rather than their family background. This ended a system of privilege based on birth.

Men could now participate in political life based on merit. All could vote in the assembly. And here was an innovation that existed in no part of the world: common laborers and peasants could now not only sit in the assembly, but also serve on juries.

Most importantly, the rule of law for all becomes more integrated into the Athenian political way of thinking and its institutions. It's an inheritance that became the backbone of America's legal system.

Chancellor James Kent

(1763-1847) was the first professor of law at Columbia University in 1793. He also served as the Chief Justice for the New York Supreme Court. And in 1814 he was appointed judge for the New York Court of Chancery, another name for a court of equity. The judge of this court was titled Chancellor.

But when Kent was appointed to the chancery there were, just like when he went to the Supreme Court, hardly, if any, written documents of decisions or precedents. Decisions were given orally and not documented. Furthermore, there were few legal theories to aid him in deciding these cases. To put it bluntly, things were in a mess.

The effects of not only the Revolutionary War, but also the War of 1812 on the American psyche militated against overtly drawing upon British law, the works of the famous English jurist Blackstone, or any of the English legal precedents. Kent had to justify common law on other than just English customs as well as finding a valid way to introduce some of the English principles of law. He masterfully succeeded.

Out of this situation came Kent's greatest contribution: The Commentaries on American Law. He originally gave these as lectures to uninterested students. But it became one of the legal foundation stones for American law. His four volume work went through 14 editions.

For having helped lay the foundation for American jurisprudence, Kent received high praise from the Chief Justice of the United States. Justice Story called him the "American Blackstone."

Beside the goddess of Law is the stone tablet of the Law [Fig. 61]. She holds a scroll in one hand and her head, like Solon, is covered with a part of her robe signifying the gravity and solemnity of her mission. The inscription is from Richard Hooker.

Fig. 62

Brian Baugh

Society is well governed when its people obey the magistrates, and the magistrates obey the law.

Solon

Fig. 63

Brian Baugh

My practice was first to make myself perfectly & accurately master of the facts.

Chancellor James Kent

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 64

VIII. Poetry: Shakespeare and Homer [Figs. 65, 66]

Homer

(?1250 or ?850 BC): Who was he? When did he live? Some scholars say during the time of Moses while others think it wasn't until the late 8th century when Greek writing was coming into use.

The Iliad and the Odyssey were Western civilizations first non-religious literary works. But we have forgotten their profound and permeating influence on Western culture and its literary tradition. If it contains violence, murder, lust, adultery, revenge, deceit, killing, and war, Homer said it first and often better.

And here's the worth of Homer's work and the Greek tragedians that followed him: they speak to the human condition, clearly, directly, bluntly, and factually; they tell us about ourselves in no uncertain terms

Blood lust and the butchery of war was Homer's specialty. A master psychologist, he dramatizes both human revulsion and attraction to bloodshed. And the Iliad is Western civilizations best treatise on the subject. It's a story about Achilles' rage, not just anger, but destructive rage, how it got triggered, the ensuing blood lust, and the dire consequences to him, his comrades, and all around him. It's a lesson for the ages. It's about us.

The Odyssey deals with the code of hospitality (*xenios*) and how people live or fail to live well together. Dehumanization occurs when an individual ceases to care for others and exploits them. Ultimately, it leads to the condition of the Cyclops: "We live without rules, we do what we want," yells the monster Polyphemos as he devours six of Odysseus's sailors, which was hardly a warm welcome.

And then there's Odysseus's personal journey home, his destination. He struggles with staying focused, and forgets where he is going or where he should be going. He's tempted to forget by the excitements on his way: drugs, sex, pleasures, and release from the journey's stress. His friends have to remind and support him in staying the course.

Shakespeare

(1564-1616) is the best of the best. These are fighting words. They raise the issue of standards: whose? And that ignites a fire of social-political strife over the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity, right and wrong, true and false, and relativity.

An entire vocabulary has been developed to demolish the very concept of standards: fictional fictionism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism. No longer can one maintain intellectual respectability by trying to make distinctions between the good, the bad, and the ugly. It's socially unacceptable. A Gresham's law of the intellect seems to have taken hold where bad ideas drive out the good.

Yet America's distinguished literary authority, Bernard Bloom, places Shakespeare at the center of the Western Canon. You may think of the Canon as a Hall of Fame for the giants of Western literature. Needless to say, he has taken some flack.

But why is Shakespeare the best? Bloom argues that he excels "all other Western writers in cognitive acuity, linguistic energy, and power of invention." And Hamlet is the supreme example.

Shakespeare portrays better than any writer the complexity of character, human motivation, and the multi-dimensions of the personality. Who has yet equaled Shakespeare's knowledge of life and human beings?
Shakespeare's Hamlet speaks to every culture, nation, and ethnic group. Why? Because we all share in a common humanity.

Shakespeare tells us about us; he tells me about me. He teaches us about human nature. It's truly a multicultural masterpiece and hardly Eurocentric, which few Western writers have managed to do. It's why Shakespeare remains the best of the West and has been translated into all the major languages of the world.

The goddess, the Muse, of Poetry [Fig. 64] is characterized by the severe lines of her outer robe or chiton. This suggests that the epic and more serious forms of drama are being emphasized. The inscription is from Milton.

Fig. 65

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

The rage, the destructive rage of Achilles, this is my story....

Homer, Iliad, Bk. 1.1.

Fig. 66

Brian Baugh

What is a man, If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

Shakespeare, Hamlet: IV.4.33

Fig. 67

Progress:

The Dome and Collar is an artistic summary of America's new found sense of self and place in the world. It's optimistic and progressive. But before advancing the argument, something must first be said about progress.

For contemporary historians, the concept of progress in history has all but been banished. Contingency or chance is the more respectable concept. The very idea of progress has become contentious if not tendentious. But that was hardly the case in the 19th century.

The argument being made by the art in the Library of Congress is that progress is an integral part of the history of Western civilization and America itself. In fact, a library is a testament to our very faith in progress, defined as improved human conditions.

The Dome of the Main Reading Room [Fig. 68] and the Main Reading Room itself [Fig. 40] are replete with artistic concepts of progress. Optimism and beauty abounds. The room is replete with examples of human achievement and advances in knowledge that have contributed to the development of Western civilization. One word best describes it: progress.

It's the deeds of the 20th century that has cast a pall over such optimism and a reticence to even think in terms of progress: World War I and II, the Holocaust, Stalin's gulags, Mao's purges, and Cambodia. More than a 100 million human lives were cruelly and painfully slaughtered. And then there are more recent episodes: Kosovo, Rwanda, Iraq, Darfur, and Kenya.

Ideals are seen as illusions, best avoided in thought, word, and deed. So, does the art of the Library of Congress still have any relevance for today's society? Is its idealism something to be set aside as childish naïveté?

America is built on an ideal. And it's not only relevant but necessary for our very survival and perhaps the world's. It's a powerful corrective force. And without it we sink into an abyss of self-interest, self-indulgence, and degrade our own humanity as well as others.

The American vision is hardly naïve; it's the only vision for this world that can save us from ourselves. But we must first remember what it is.

Fig. 68

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

The Collar:

Edwin Blashfield painted 12 figures in the collar of the dome to represent epochs in civilization's history that contributed to American civilization and human progress [Fig. 68]. The evolutionary portrait from Egypt to America portrays the Library's theme as a monument to Western civilization.

The cradle of civilization begins in Egypt with writing, Judea with Religion (In Hebrew characters [Fig. 69]: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.), Greece with Philosophy, Rome with Administration, Islam with Physics, Middle Ages with Modern Languages, Italy with Fine Arts, Germany with Art of Painting, Spain with Discovery, England with Literature, France with Emancipation, and America with Science represented by Lincoln seated next to an electric dynamo (electric light was a 19th century invention).

The paintings summarize the key characteristics of Western civilization found in the art work of the Main Reading Room. But they also highlight another trait. Western civilization is an open culture; it borrows and builds upon the best from other civilizations and finds its fullest expression in America.

Fig. 69

Brian Baugh

The Dome:

Thomas Jefferson conceived of architecture as a means of civic expression and education. He found the symbols of the political virtues necessary for a new nation to survive in the mathematical proportion of the Roman classical design. The peace and prosperity of the state depends upon the right political order and social harmony. The dome is the architectural symbol of this reality.

In the center of the Dome's oculus, Blashfield has painted a female figure removing a veil from her head [Figs. 67, 68]. It represents the removal of ignorance and the light of understanding.

Above her head, outside, and on top of the lantern, is the golden torch of learning [Fig. 79]. These are fitting symbols for a library. They express confidence that the fruits of knowledge will make for a better world. As America was about to enter the Progressive Age of the 20th century, the Library also served as a symbol of America's belief and confidence in itself.

Sed fugit interea, fugit inreparabile tempus.

Virgil, Georgics, Bk. III. 284

The Flight of Time:

A magnificent piece of sculpture is located above the entrance doors inside the Main Reading Room [Figs. 70,71]. Tourists can't see it because its located directly under the Visitor's Gallery. Yet it deserves commentary.

To the exasperation of Superintendent Bernard Green, this sculpture by John Flanagan took seven years to complete, missing all imposed and re-imposed deadlines. Several years after the Library was officially opened, Flanagan's clock, Flight of Time, was installed with all the finishing touches. On that day, 9 August 1902, Green declared the Library of Congress completed.

Flanagan's perfectionism paid off; it was worth the wait. A bronze Father Time with huge wings, from which comes its title, strides forward. He has a scythe in one hand and an hour glass in the other. Bronze maidens with children representing the seasons surround him. At his feet are two bronze students symbolizing study. The clock's sun-like disk is gold with embedded signs of the zodiac in the mosaic behind it.

Below the clock is a large cartouche where bronze runners pass on the torch of learning. So what's to be made of this clock besides that it tells time?

Tempus fugit, time flies, was historically associated with watchmakers and often engraved on their works. The motto finds it origins in the above quote from Virgil: "But meanwhile time flees irrecoverably." Irretrievable Time fleeing is the theme. It's artistically expressed with gravity several places on the second floor [Fig. 37], but here it finds its greatest dramatic expression.

Virgil, of course, uses time in the psychological sense of our everyday experience of a past, present, and future. But he also uses it as a metaphor for the human condition; time is something impossible to get back. Time marches on. And that has implications for life.

Father Time's scythe and hourglass are unforgiving. They give life a sense of urgency. The Maidens remind us of life's seasons; man's destiny on earth has a beginning and end. Time is the fourth dimension of the playing field within which we live.

There's nothing morbid here. It just makes the question of how we want to live more acute. Will it be in the darkness or in the light, in ignorance or in knowledge, in hope or in despair? Western civilization's history has been one attempt at an answer.

And the Library of Congress does it artistically. Architecture's fourth dimension is time in that it embodies memory. It carries forth the wisdom and learnings of the past whether in the Dome, symbolic of a Higher Power, or in the temple like structures, symbolic of the sacred. For without the sacred in human life, life becomes inhuman.

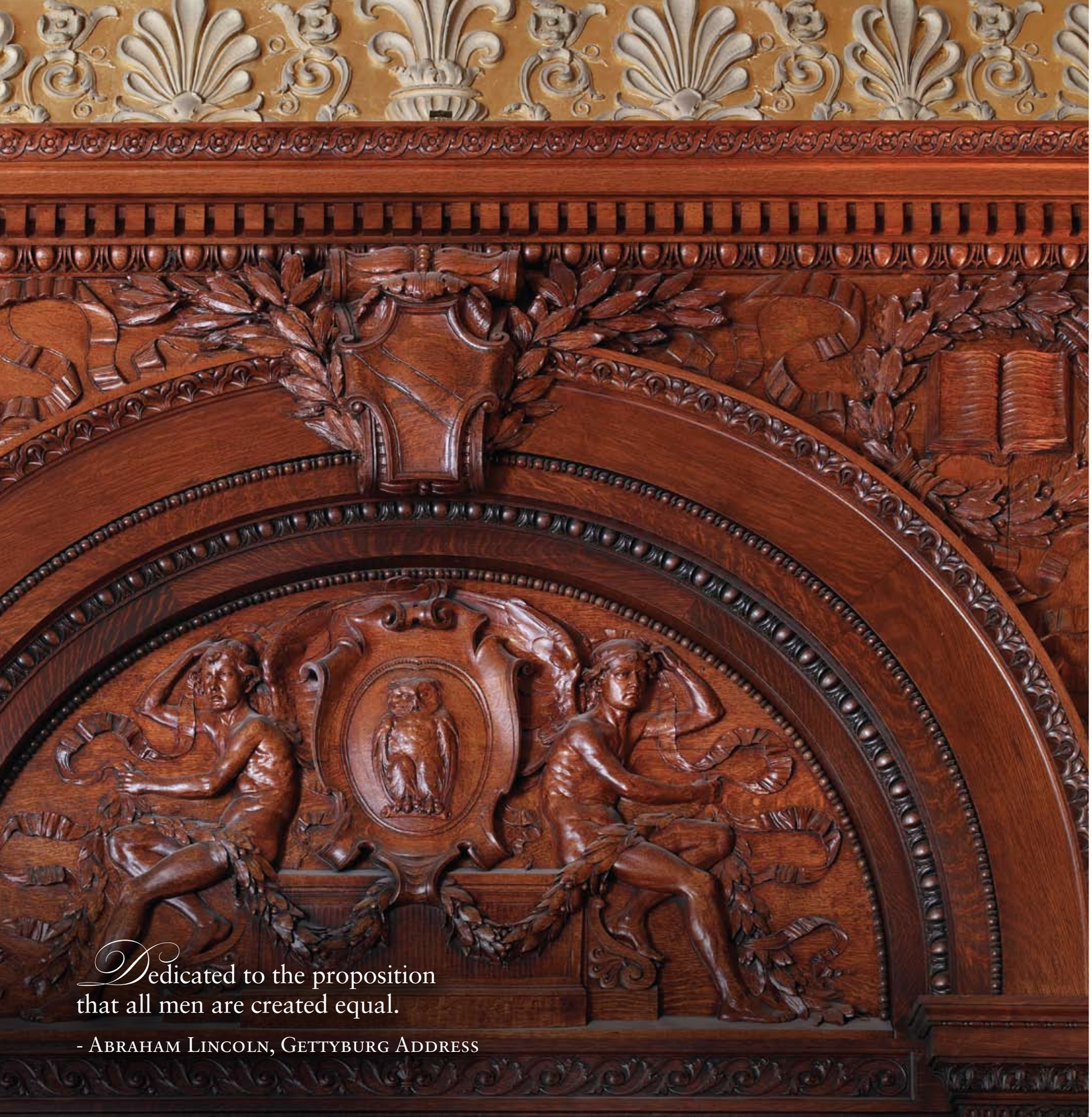
Like the bronze runners passing on the torch of knowledge, we walk through the architectural space filled with the memory of what we have learned in time past and how we are wiser for it today. We are reminded of our inheritance and a duty to preserve it, build upon it, and hand it off to our successors. And there's a limited time to do it in. *Tempus fugit!*

Brian Baugh

Fig. 70

Fig. 71

Brian Baugh



Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 72

Part VI
Reading Room
Members of Congress

Hall Of Heroes

Above the doors entering the Congressional Reading Room of the Library of Congress are nine paintings. This is known as the Hall of Heroes because each lunette over a doorway depicts an episode in the life of a Graeco-Roman mythological hero.

Who are these Greek mythological figures: Paris, Jason, Bellerophon, Orpheus, Perseus, Prometheus, Theseus, Achilles, and Hercules? And what's their purpose if any?

They are allegories about the human condition and right conduct. The heroes are distinguished by their courage in the face of adversity. But they are not saints. They all are marked by human faults and frailties—just like us.

The central theme in every story revolves around evil, fear, courage, and risk. Taken as a whole, it's a lesson about the courage needed to confront evil and wrongdoing, the dangers involved in doing so, and the fears to be overcome as the hero challenges his opponent.

For it takes courage to confront evil precisely because in confronting evil one risks being destroyed by it. The stories provide a reminder of the necessity to live heroically and what it takes to live heroically: courage and conviction. And so it is with the American people who are about building a nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

When the Members of Congress pass through these doors to the Reading Room, the lunettes are reminders and sources of inspiration of what will be demanded of them as leaders of our nation. Do they have the determination, the steadfastness, the courage, and the conviction to overcome the obstacles and meet the challenges that lie before them? It's a test of their mettle, their character.

Civilization and Self Restraint:

But these stories have another lesson: The Achilles' Heel of Western and American civilization. The strength, integrity, peace, and prosperity of any civilization depend upon how well it exercises self-restraint.

Each story reveals the tragic consequences of a failure to exercise restraint in controlling the emotions of anger, resentment, revenge, lust, greed, and pride in the pursuit of desires and ambitions. There's no god that punishes; each failure has its own consequences.

"Don't blame the gods," says Homer in the first book of the Odyssey, "it's by their own reckless ways that men bring about their own pains and miseries." These stories are best understood as statements about the human condition. Myths, after all, are ways of disclosing something about ourselves to ourselves and truths about the social order.

The Greeks viewed moral laws like the law of gravity. And there is no forgiveness. Hamlet articulated the concept best: "Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural consequences."

Paris, prince of Troy, is the guest and recipient of King Menelaus' generosity. Yet Paris gazes with amorous eyes upon Menelaus' wife, Helen [Fig. 73A]. He violates a fundamental human code and absconds with Helen to Troy. Adultery leads to the Trojan War and as Homer reminds us: "the ruin of ten thousand Achaeans."

Jason and his Argonauts are gathered in preparation to seek the Golden Fleece. They find it, but in the process he marries Medea, a jealous and revengeful woman, for ulterior motives. The story turns on the horrors that ensue.

Bellerophon is seated next to Minerva. She gives him the golden bridle to ride her flying horse, Pegasus. He flies off to kill a dreaded monster. Bellerophon succeeds in this and other contests. But he forgets that these are gifts of the

Fig. 73a

Brian Baugh

Fig. 73b

Brian Baugh

god. And so his pride, his scorn of others, becomes his undoing. Blindness and poverty are his punishments.

Orpheus was known for the power of his singing. He even tried to rescue his wife, Eurydice, from Hades with song. He is trying to ward off with song the women who are trying to kill him because in faithfulness to Eurydice he refuses to love them. In rage, the women slaughter him.

Perseus lopped off Medusa's head with her writhing snake-head hair. Anyone looking upon her face would be turned to stone. Perseus is seen here turning the tyrant Polydectes, who tried to rape his mother, into stone [Fig. 73B]. Perseus gives Medusa's head to Athena, who set it in the middle of her shield [Fig. 33].

Prometheus is closely associated with Pandora and the jar or box. He is here with his brother Epimetheus, the name means afterthought. It was his failure to think before he acted that caused all the problems in the first place. Pandora does open the jar/box releasing evils into the world, but closes it just in time to preserve the spirit of hope.

Theseus abandons Ariadne who helped him kill the Minotaur, save his friends from death, and find his way out of the labyrinth of her father, King Minos. She is seen here sleeping next to him with Minerva in the distance. Theseus claims as an excuse that he dreamed Minerva commanded him to do it. His betrayal results in his father's death.

Achilles is hidden by his mother in a harem so he won't have to go to war. But as much as he finds certain advantages here, Odysseus discovers him and off to Troy he goes. We know the rest of the story.

Hercules in a fit of rage killed his friend. His punishment, as seen in the fresco, is to serve as a slave of Queen Omphale for three years doing women's work. He is obviously quite incompetent in these skills.

Members of Congress Reading Room:

The room is now used for special public meetings, gatherings, and presentations. It is very rich with dark oak paneling [Fig. 72], marble mosaics, and ceiling paintings. Two marble fireplaces with mosaic panels by Frederick Dielman immediately stand out. The one in the north end represents Law; the one at the south end represents History. The ceiling has seven panels that represent civilization through the Spectrum of Light.

Law:

Law is represented by a woman with a circle of light around her head, a glory, suggesting honor, and reverence [Fig. 74]. She wears the aegis of Minerva, symbol of strength, protection, righteousness, wisdom, and justice. On the steps below is a book of law and scale of justice. The doves are emblems of mercy. Law is being portrayed as the centralizing and ordering force of society. As such it is sacred and to be honored.

Dielman wanted to emphasize, in contrast to the judicial, the legislative side of law that finds its origin in the people. The room was designed for the legislators. The throne of Law is therefore placed not in a temple, a court of law, but in a pastoral setting to highlight the importance of legislators making law.

Law holds a palm, symbol of merit, in her right hand. Approaching her are the friends of Law, those traits that animate and support Law. Industry sits with a hammer and wheel. Peace holds the olive branch and wears a crown of olive. Truth holds a lily.

The left hand of Law holds a sword, the vehicle of punishment and correction. Fraud, Discord, and Violence are the enemies of Truth, Peace, and Industry. The scene portrays an eternal struggle demanding eternal vigilance.

Fraud is a crone that shrinks from Law. Discord holds snakes tied together in a knot; both her hair and robe is disordered. And Violence wearing a steel helmet sits with a blazing torch at his feet.

These were reminders for the legislators. Good government requires virtue for the rule of law to prevail. Yet the forces that undermine Law are always at work to destroy it. The contest between good will and ill-will is everlasting.

Fig. 74

Brian Baugh

Fig. 75 Brian Baugh

History:

The panel of history has some layered meanings and is difficult to discern at first glance [Fig. 75].

The first level expresses the panel's theme. The woman in the center holds a pen and a book. She is standing between two marble piers that honor famous historians such as Herodotus, Livy, Tacitus, etc. Behind the entire scene are three civilizations of antiquity in which history was most developed: the Pyramid of Egypt, the Parthenon of Greece, and the Colosseum of Rome. History is civilization's memory.

At the bottom of each pier is a wreath with a palm crossing it. One wreath is laurel standing for peace; the other is oak standing for war. These reflect the twin topics of history: war and peace [also Fig 26]. The palm symbolizes the reward of success in these endeavors.

The predecessors of history were mythology and tradition. The female figure, Mythology, holds a globe. This symbolizes the different theories expressed through mythology of how the world works and our place in it. Next to her is the female sphinx of the Greeks associated with the unsolvable Riddle of the World.

In contrast to the Egyptian, the Greek sphinx with female head and breasts, wings of an eagle, and body of a lioness with a serpent or dragon tail was a deformity, a reprehensible monster. She was a dehumanized human. And that was what was to be feared.

The myth has the sphinx killing anyone who couldn't answer the riddle: "What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?" This created quite a disruption in the social order, as murder usually does.

Oedipus solves the riddle: "A man crawls on all fours in infancy, walks on two legs as a man, and with a cane, the third leg, in old age." The outwitted sphinx becomes enraged and kills herself by leaping off a cliff.

Oedipus may be smart but not so wise. He is blind to his impulses and in a fit of anger he unknowingly killed his father, married his mother, and has four children. His sons are his brothers and his daughters his sisters. "Unnatural deeds have unnatural consequences."

At this revelation his wife, mother, commits suicide and Oedipus blinds himself. Oedipus, now blind, sees for the first time the consequences of unchecked impulses.

In front of Tradition sit a women and boy. She instructs the young boy in the wisdom of the ages through legends and folktales. It's a medieval scene as indicated by the shield against the pier, the distaff held by the lady, and the lyre in the boy's hand.

Tradition is the repository of civilization's accumulated knowledge and wisdom about our nature and the world around us. But there's a difference between knowledge and wisdom as there is between youth and age. Yet it takes wisdom to know the difference.

God said, "Let there be light", and there was light.

Genesis: 1:3

Spectrum of Light:

The seven ceiling paintings, entitled Spectrum of Light, by Carl Gutherz were intended to represent some phase of human or divine achievement. They are perhaps a little overdone in symbolism and are really in need of restoration. They are difficult to make out and in need of restoration. Therefore more detail is provided here as an aid.

Each color reflects the painting's central figure and theme. There are cherubs in every corner of the panels representing a specific field of an art or science. Each panel has eight shields, escutcheons. The shields contain state mottos or sayings many of which are in Latin. The seven themes are as follows:

Let There Be Light (Yellow):

This is the starting location, the middle panel. The paintings proceed to the south toward History then from this location to the north toward Law.

A Divine Intelligence is enthroned in the midst of space declaring: "Let there be light." The cherubs represent Physics, Metaphysics, Psychology, and Theology. The state shields are Massachusetts, Kentucky, and South Carolina. Kentucky's motto reminds us: United We Stand; Divided We Fall.

The Light of Excellence (Orange):

The theme of excellence was derived by the artist from Longfellow's poem, Excelsior. It's an expression of progress, moving higher and higher. A spirit stands midway on a pyramid of steps calls man forth to greater achievement. The inscriptions on the banner read: Courage, Effort, Excellence, and Excelsior.

The cherubs symbolize Progress in their representations of human achievement in Architecture and Art; Transportation; the Phonograph and Telephone; and Invention and Design. The state shields are of Georgia, New York, Delaware, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The one word motto of Rhode Island is Hope.

The Light of Poetry (Red):

Poetry is riding Pegasus. She holds a torch in one hand and is reaching for the unattainable light, symbol of the ideals for which we should strive. She calls us to be all that we can be.

The cherubs stand for Tragedy and Comedy; Lyric Poetry; Pastoral Poetry; and Fable. The state shields are of Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, and Louisiana. North Carolina's motto best captures the spirit: Esse Quam Videri, To Be, Rather than to Seem.

The Light of State (Violet):

This panel is located closest to the south fireplace and has Columbia typifying the color violet. The artist selected violet because it was a mixture of red, white, and blue [Fig. 76].

These were the colors that symbolized the nation that had achieved the highest political ideals yet on earth. Columbia holds a shield of the United States' Flag in one hand and in the other a liberty cap on a staff with the inscription 1776. The American eagle hovers over her shoulder.

Fig. 76

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

Fig. 77

Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

The cherubs represent Suffrage, Justice, Liberty, and Equality. The state shields are of Montana, Iowa, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Pennsylvania's motto ties together the three concepts necessary for national survival: Virtue, Liberty, and Independence.

The Light of Research (Green):

This is the fifth panel in the spectrum and is located next to the first, Let There Be Light. Green is typified by The Spirit of the Lens. She is surrounded by the sea, the source of her investigations. Her tools are the telescope and microscope that can reveal the secrets of nature.

The cherubs are involved with original investigation and research. They hold the tools of their professions: Two work with a microscope, Chemistry; Mineralogy, and Archeology, deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics. The state shields are of Nebraska, Utah, Wisconsin, Nevada, Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois. Nebraska's motto epitomizes the essence of a republic: Equality Before the Law.

The Light of Truth (Blue):

The spirit of Truth crushes the dragon of Ignorance and Falsehood beneath her feet [Fig. 77]. She is reaching to heaven for a ray of light to still the beast once and for all.

The cherubs hold a level, plumb, and a bible; each is considered to be an agent indicating the presence of a universal law. The state shields are of Wyoming, Idaho, Arizona, North Dakota, New Mexico, Colorado, and West Virginia. Colorado's motto reflects the belief of the people: Nil Sine Numine, Nothing without God.

The Light of Science (Indigo):

This is the seventh panel next to the north fireplace, Law. Indigo is represented by a figure of Astronomy exploring the movements of the universe. She is guided by the soul symbolized by a butterfly above her head.

The cherubs represent various phases of astronomical study. The state shields are of New Jersey, Washington, Oregon, Ohio, Mississippi, and Maine. Kansas's motto sums up the spirit of the paintings: *Ad Astra Per Aspera,* To the stars through difficulties.

The overriding message in these paintings is one of optimism, progress, and encouragement to reach for the ideal. Aspirations and strivings bring out the best in the individual and the nation. In that very process we participate in and continue the Creation. The paintings were intended to stir enthusiasm and nourish commitment to a greater good.

The cynic may chuckle at this. But in so doing contributes to his and our dehumanization. "Where there is no vision," says the Book of Proverbs (29:18), "the people perish."

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Fig. 78

Part VII
Epilogue

Dedicated To The Proposition

The Library of Congress had two purposes. One was to serve as a state of the art national library for every American. The other was to be an artistic monument to Western civilization that found its greatest expression in America: "...a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

The Library embodies in its art and architecture the political, philosophical, and moral beliefs upon which our nation was built. It reminds us of our ideals and warns us about the consequences if we fail to remember.

As architecture, the Library makes a statement beyond mere building. In essence, the Library embodies the American identity. It speaks to what's needed to nurture, preserve, and protect that identity. In summary, this is a set of beliefs contained in the Declaration of Independence and Gettysburg Address along with the virtue of self-restraint.

Our fellow Americans, our ancestors, from the 19th century hardly denigrated Western civilization or America. They were optimistic and believed that they could make a better life not only for themselves, but also for their children's children. And the Library of Congress speaks to those beliefs, hopes, and aspirations.

This is a Renaissance building reflecting Renaissance concerns with civilization, human nature, and what it means to live a human life. Civilization referred to the ordering of life and society and excellence and restraint. Human nature embraced both the dignity of the individual and the need to regulate the passions by virtue. A full human life was one lived in balance, illustrated by the Family, which incorporated work, study, religion, recreation, and rest {Figs. 6, 32].

A visit to the Library is a classical aesthetic experience, which means that our minds as well as spirits have been nourished and uplifted. It puts us in touch with the higher angels of our nature and of our nation before stepping back out onto First Street.

The American Identity:

The book's argument is that a comprehensive interpretation of the art and architecture of the Library of Congress would tell us what it means to be an American. And so it does.

It does so by putting us in touch with our Western roots originating in Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. It does so by connecting us with the many hands and minds—symbolized by the 16 statutes in the Main Reading Room, the nine portico busts, and the numerous names embedded in the walls and ceilings—who helped form Western civilization. It does so by reminding us of America's foundational beliefs and their origins. It does so by stating how Faith, Reason, and Virtue serve as the cornerstone of that foundation. And it does so by stirring our passions to pursue the ideals for which America stands.

On the north side of the Library's second floor are four paintings by Robert Reid. They are titled: Knowledge, Wisdom [Fig. 78], Understanding, and Philosophy (i.e. science). These are reason's tools for freeing us from ignorance, superstition, and prejudice. The artistic device for portraying reason and its illuminating powers is the torch, which is found in ornamentations and decorations throughout the monument and on the outside dome of the Library [Fig. 79].

Minerva is another symbol of that divine like quality of reason, knowledge and wisdom. A civilization of a "government of the people, by the people, for the people" rests upon knowledge and reason. Education's primary aim was originally conceived as a means to ensure the survival of the Republic by forming good citizens.

FIG. 79 Library of Congress, Carol H. Highsmith

The Library teaches that nothing great can be achieved by the individual or nation without virtue, eight in particular. They can be summarized in one word: by the Greeks it was sophrosune, for the Romans it was virtus, and for us it is self-restraint.

In a Republic, virtue in the people is the only countering force to the destructive centrifugal forces of unbridled individual freedom and self-interest. It's the Achilles' heel of the nation.

The common good of a nation is whatever conditions are necessary for us to flourish as human beings. To be an American means placing the common good first in our political thoughts, words, and deeds. And that requires that the citizenry possess a certain amount of virtue.

The dignity and freedom of man is implicit in almost every piece of art in the building. Whether in the ethnic heads, the collar of the dome or the tympani above the main entrances to the Library, there is a clear message: We all share in a common humanity.

Idealistic? Yes. But these ideals are the only corrective force Americans have whenever we go awry.

There is nothing Pollyannaish in this building. We are reminded that wickedness is not just a reality, but that it has a constant presence and consequences. We are reminded that the forces of order and disorder, good and evil, are in an ongoing struggle demanding, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "eternal vigilance."

Vedder's paintings on government are a prominent statement to that effect. Likewise Minerva, with her spear and Gorgon breastplate and shield, reminds us that ruthless force must be at hand to establish and preserve civilization.

The Library also tells us about us, as Homer did, that we don't live forever. Man dies. There's a limited time to answer the first great question posed in Western civilization when Socrates asked: "What course of life is best?"

The next question to follow was: How do we organize ourselves personally and politically to achieve that goal? This has been the quest of Western civilization. And America provides a path through its beliefs and ideals. But there's a limited time in which to make that journey. *Tempus Fugit.*

Conclusion:

There are no new, original, or invented ideas presented in this book.
They have all been derived from the works of scholars listed in the Bibliography,
which serve more as references than a bibliography. If there is anything original,
it is in the combining of their ideas to provide a more comprehensive
interpretation of the art and architecture of the Library of Congress.

Much more can be said about the architecture, sculpture, and paintings
in the Library of Congress. For the sake of brevity, a lot has been omitted:
the galleries, pavilions, stairways, mosaics, inscriptions and many paintings
in the corridors. They all speak to Western civilization, our heritage.

Learn more about this wonderful building by visiting the Library's web site:
http://www.loc.gov/loc/visit/ or even purchase a copy of the magnificent book:
The Library of Congress—our major documentary source,
in the Library's gift shop.

Yet we believe that this work provides an interpretation of the Library,
not yet published anywhere, that captures the essence of this monument.
We hope that you have found it not only informative,
but that it will also strengthen your love for America
and what it means to be an American.

Author Biographies

John F. Gilligan, Ph.D.

John F. Gilligan, Ph. D, a licensed clinical psychologist, is president emeritus of Fayette Companies. He is the past chairman of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, the Employers' Association of Illinois, and the Central Illinois Workforce board of directors. He currently serves on the on the board of directors for the Creve Coeur Club, the Workforce Development Network, J.C. Proctor Endowment, the Institute for Principled Leadership in Public Service at Bradley University, and the Drug Prevention Network of the Americas/Red Interamericana para la Prevención de las Drogas.

He was a founding member of the Leadership Development Center and has provided managerial training and consultation to managers representing more than 200 of the Fortune 500 corporations. He has taught in the School of Business Administration at Bradley University's and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

In addition to published professional research and presentations, he has written numerous editorials. His previous book with Charles Stoner was the Adversity Challenge.

Ray LaHood

Congressman Ray LaHood is serving his seventh and final term representing the 18th District of Illinois. Elected in 1994, Congressman LaHood has carried on a rich tradition of leadership from a U.S. House district which has been represented by American leaders such as Robert Michel, Everett Dirksen, and Abraham Lincoln.

Congressman LaHood is widely viewed as a person with a deep respect for the institution of Congress and who works across party lines to achieve policy goals. He has led efforts to establish a higher level of civility, decorum, and bipartisanship in the House of Representatives. His knowledge of Congress and his fair-handed demeanor have enabled him to be called upon many times to chair the House of Representatives during proceedings on contentious issues including the impeachment debate in 1998.

He currently serves on the House Appropriations Committee and has previously served on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Agriculture Committee, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the Veteran's Affairs Committee.

Congressman LaHood and his wife, Kathy, live in Peoria and have four children and seven grandchildren.

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