

INTRODUCTION



HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: thus would I describe the esoteric and occult symbolism of the sacred space of Washington, D.C. Sit down with a map of the city, pencil, ruler, protractor, and pair of compasses. You can draw pentagrams and hexagrams, triangles, crosses, circles, and other multiangled geometrical constructs that will fill the pages of books and websites with potentially erudite speculation and amazing detail. Many people have and many more undoubtedly will.

On the other hand, as we walk through the streets of Washington, D.C., in the course of this book, we will enter an eternal world populated by archetypes in stone—carvings, monuments, statues, buildings, and inscriptions. Like hierophants of the Mystery schools of antiquity, they silently communicate a curriculum designed to inspire, elevate, and teach eternal Truth. Washington, D.C., like Jerusalem or Mecca, offers a pilgrimage for those who seek a greater understanding of the miracle of their homeland and for visitors from other shores come to glimpse the hope of the first great free nation on earth.

Washington, D.C., is the central shrine of America's national religion. This is a nondenominational faith, in line with the Masonic ideal, capable of being shared by all who recognize God as that which has created and sustains the universe. Such is the primal deity worshipped by Christians, Jews, and Muslims, yet it is also the basis of Hinduism,

opposite. Sculpture of Art by Francois M. L. Tonetti-Dozzi in the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress. The other figures in the series include Science, Religion, Law, Poetry, Commerce, Philosophy, and History. Also see pages 21–23. (Photo by Carol M. Highsmith.)

Buddhism, Confucianism, Paganism, and the New Age faiths—in fact every religion and spiritual path. We glance at a sunrise or sunset, a flower, the night sky, a sculpture or painting, the eyes of a baby or a beautiful woman, and find therein God—in whose Name we live and breathe and have our being.

The sacred interaction between heaven and earth is continually mirrored in the iconography of Washington, D.C. The most prominent is the Washington Monument, symbol of the human will aspiring to the heavens while remaining firmly rooted on earth. Washington was the first president, the victorious general who led us in the battle to win our freedom, the model against whom all leaders are judged. Yet, his monument offers a profound statement of impersonality, an expression of both the most austere severity and elegant symmetry—a far cry from the cult of personality dominating modern politics.

The Lincoln Memorial is a temple erected to the dream of equality before the law for all people, and of the indivisible nature of the American union. Lincoln is a modern sacrifice, an offering upon the altar of justice. It is ironic that the nation that dared to aspire to freedom was mired in the ancient institution of slavery. This stubborn holdover from the Colonial era ultimately resulted in the greatest loss of American blood in our history. Its unholy remnants still stain our national self-image. Lincoln sits in mute contemplation to remind us that evil will not be tolerated by the Forces that direct and sustain this country, that our duty is to rise above the errors and sins of our nature.

On the steps of the Jefferson Memorial, we begin our ascent to the world of pure thought, the elegant abode of intellectual clarity and moral rectitude. Standing proud and tall among some of history's most inspiring words, Jefferson gazes upon the city he helped design. His eyes are filled with understanding of the vicissitudes of fashion and the temptations of the moment. His will held firm, he counsels us to persevere with resoluteness on the course of Liberty. In his open rotunda, whose dome resembles an astronomical observatory seeking intimacy with heaven, he advises us to take the long view, that of the eternity in which he now resides.

Continuing on to the Capitol, the Temple of Liberty, we are surrounded by a magical pantheon of those who created a free nation. If we look up, we see the painting of the *Apotheosis of Washington* 180 feet above. Its outer rim proclaims that the gods of antiquity still walk among us. Minerva leads the way in science, rejecting superstition and “consensus,” insisting on penetrating to the heart of reality with objective experimentation. Ever-active Mercury continues to inspire commerce as he did in Rome more than two thousand years ago. For he knows that those who close their minds to the benefits of trade have little reason to maintain peace when conflict arises between them, as it inevitably will. Neptune rules his watery realm, raising his trident of power to remind America that he controls some 70 percent of the surface of the earth, that the nation that does not sail mighty upon the sea will fall to the one who does, and that free access to shipping and fishing are as important today as ever. Ceres speaks similar words, pointing out that cultivation of the earth is the lot of human beings. Those who are successful in learning her secrets and pursuing her disciplines will prosper. Those who do not will wither and die. Vulcan leads his workers to the realization that we are put on this earth to build and fashion and construct. Humanity is made up of tool-wielding beings designed to imitate the creativity of their Maker. Finally, Columbia, the female personification of America, wields her sword in fiery demonstration that Freedom is not free. It must ever be defended, protected, and earned—sometimes through the age-old ordeal of trial by combat.

Washington, D.C., is simultaneously a hymnal and a history book, a shrine and a university, a prayer and a symphony. It is a memorial to truth in a culture of lies, a beacon of freedom in a world of tyranny, a ray of hope in the darkness of despair. Let us explore together its invigorating vision of courage and liberty, morality and lucidity, creativity and joy.