

THE GODDESS AND THE EAGLE
American Historical Truths as Seen in Our National Symbols

By Patricia Nell Warren

"Every coin has a story to tell," a Chicago collector said recently. "Money is history that you can hold in your hands." This is the standard philosophy about coins. But it was my mother, a serious coin collector, who pointed out the extraordinary fact of a pagan goddess popping up on early American coins. How – she asked me -- could this happen when the new United States still clung so fiercely to established Protestant religion?

Nellie Bradford Flinn Warren never got to go to college. A child of the Jazz Age, she went to work after high school to help support the family during the Great Depression. But she was passionately self-educated, with an abiding interest in history, especially American history, and ancient Greek and Roman history. She got interested in coins by poring over a motley collection of stray old coins that had collected in the safe at

our Montana ranch – octagonal \$20 gold pieces, Civil War cents, commemorative issues. From there Nellie branched out to early American, then Greek and Roman coins. My mother saved every penny she could from the “house money,” bought reference books, pored over coin catalogs. Now and then, drawing a deep breath when she saw a bargain, she ordered something and waited with bated breath till it came in the mail. With reverential care, she’d put it in one of her fattening coin albums. Now and then, with stock-market shrewdness, she’d take the profit on something that had gone up in value, and trade it for a coin that was rarer.

My dad, struggling to keep the ranch afloat, looked the other way when she spent money on coins – he knew it made her happy. Needless to say, my mother’s passion about history rubbed off on me, the way human fingerprints are left on coins.

One day in the 1960s, Mom sat me down and had me flip through her *Guide Book of United States Coins*. Various early coins showed the Goddess seated or standing, splendidly draped in her toga, holding up a pair of scales or a liberty cap. The motto of a 1786 Massachusetts coin clearly identifies her as “Goddess Liberty.”

“Good grief!” my mother said, raising her eyebrows. She was a good Presbyterian who had played the organ at her church, and felt great pride in her Puritan ancestors, the Bradfords. “I thought they didn’t like pagans in Massachusetts.”

My mother’s question stuck in my mind for years.

Symbols are highly charged, and vital for any nation’s public positioning. For thousands of years, empires and nations have put their most important symbols and their most vital positioning on their coins. Like ideas, symbols tend to have long lives; they can be constantly readopted and reinvented, even manipulated, for thousands of years. Coins give a government just two shots at positioning: the obverse (face) and the reverse. So a country has to ponder its numismatic choices deeply.

Most Americans today react with deep emotion to our symbols, exactly like they’re supposed to do... but they have no idea what these emblems really mean or where they came from. My mother’s question points squarely at a mystery, a puzzle about our country’s view of itself and its history. The coins suggest that a fundamental shift took place between around 1850 and the Second World War – a move from our founders’ original positioning through a profound re-positioning. The re-positioning has

drastically affected how we see our history and express our symbols. Yet our original coins are still there, dotted along our time-line, archeological evidence of the starkest sort, like an inalterable line of fossilized footprints along an ancient riverbed. They, and the message they send, can't be erased so easily. The timeline of coins tells the real story of where we started, and where we went to, and how we got there.

During the 1776-1783 American Revolution, the American concept of "liberty" evolved slowly and creakily to embrace freedom from churchmen as well as freedom from overseas rule and kings. Most colonial American governments had been virtual dictatorships of established religion, with church and state united, and all persons except white male Protestant property owners barred from voting and office-holding. Yet change was in the wind. European revolutions that had erupted between 1581 and 1850 - in Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, German-speaking countries - had been driven as much by hatred of clergy as by hatred of monarchy. Revolutionaries seized church property, stripped clergy of privilege, executed or exiled them.

Inevitably some of these anti-church feelings filtered across the Atlantic. American liberals like George Mason, Mercy Otis Warren and others began advocating amendments to the Constitution, to be called the Bill of Rights. All the abuses listed in the Bill of Rights had been perpetrated not just by and in Britain - they had been perpetrated by established religion right in the American colonies. Proof of this can easily be found in the list of grievances against Puritan governance in the 1630 Massachusetts Body of Liberties, an almost forgotten document that was actually the first "declaration" of rights in American history.

Though the "free" United States was being born, most of the new state constitutions and state statutes continued the old unfree religious establishments, meaning that only white male practicing property-owning Christians had voting rights or civil rights. But, like spring rivers in full spate, various traditions of thought were now flowing turbidly together in America, to swell that powerful flood of demand for disestablishment of religion and a broadened concept of "liberty." Four of these traditions - classical Republic tradition, native American tradition, Freemasonry and liberal Christianity -- determined our national choice of symbols in a very direct way, especially those placed on our coinage. Indeed, at times there was political struggle and

controversy over these coin images before the hot metal blanks ever got stamped by the dies.

As I scrutinize the symbols on our coins, I find that they offer stunning insight into -- and forensic evidence of -- deliberately censored truths about our half millennium of history. This is especially true of the Goddess of Liberty and the Eagle, which were paired on our coinage for over 150 years. So closely linked are the two symbols that I often think of Liberty as a divine falconer, with the Eagle sitting calmly on her wrist.

ROMAN RIGOR

The first stream of tradition that swept our founders was the Age of Enlightenment, and its revival of Greek and Roman republican government.

In the pre-Christian Mediterranean world, disciplined questioning was fostered because it enabled the ancients to make their advances in philosophy, art, science, government. One of the earliest questions was whether a people had the right to demand accountability from tyrannical rulers. Out of this question came the republics of Greece and Rome. The Roman Republic was the biggest single classical influence on American civic thinking because it had dethroned Rome's kings in 509 B.C., thus providing a high-profile and enduring model for combating monarchy. The 16th century Dutch revolution against Spanish monarchy, and the foundation of the Dutch Republic by liberal Protestants, had provided a further model, one for putting a Christian spin on the old Roman Republic model. Our fiercely Calvinistic Protestant male founders may have seen the Republic idea differently than "enlightened" male colonists like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who were deists, meaning they rejected faith and used reason only to find their Supreme Being. But both factions were in evident agreement about one thing: the American colonies wanted to end British royal rule. Roman government ideas had worked for a long time – why not revive them in the New World?

As officers in the American Continental Army fought the King's redcoats, they identified intensely with Roman military tradition. Most of them belonged to the Society of the Cincinnati, a military society founded in 1783 (the year the Revolution ended).

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus was a great Roman general who defended the Republic, then quietly went home to plow his fields. Cincinnatus' example was held sacred by the society's first president, General Washington, who did a similar thing after the American Revolution. Some early American coins display the symbol of a plow, in tribute to Washington's deed in rejecting what could have become a grab for greater personal political power for himself.

The word "republic" roughly translates as "returning to the people" (Latin *populus*). Dictionaries loosely define a republic as any form of government that is not a monarchy. But it's important to be more specific. The Roman Republic, founded in 509 B.C. when the Roman monarchy was deposed, was definitely not a democracy as we understand democracy today (the word comes from Greek *demos*). The *demos*, or "common people," weren't deemed a legal part of the *populus*. The new Rome, with its growing urban center on the famous seven hills, continued to be ruled by an oligarchy of powerful wealthy patricians, or aristocratic families. They controlled the Senate, a legislative body of elders (*sen* means old) that had already existed during Rome's monarchy. Roman women had greater legal, economic and social independence than Greek women, but still lived "under the power" of Roman men.

But the Roman tribes' male non-aristocrat population had angrily demanded certain rights as the monarchy fell. They wanted to be considered part of the *populus*. They wanted the laws to be written down. They wanted their interests to be safeguarded from patrician abuse by a protective body of tribal officials, or *tribuni*, that their designated assemblies would elect. So a constitutional body of law, the Twelve Tables, was written that endured for the next 900 years. Tribunes and consuls effectively formed a branch of plebian government to balance that of the aristocrats. Officials were not elected directly by the people, but by a body of electors who represented the Republic's best minds. The Republic also established a judicial system to try wrongdoers and settle disputes. Hence a system of "checks and balances" emerged in Roman civic life.

In 65 A.D., the Republic ended abruptly when Augustus Caesar proclaimed himself emperor. He insisted that he ruled by "divine right" in the name of Jupiter, Rome's chief God, and made it stick because he controlled the armed forces. For the next three centuries, succeeding emperors took the tribunes' power, crushed the Senate,

forbade elections, amended the Twelve Tables by personal edict. This religious cult of “divinely mandated” imperial rule was headed by Rome’s high priest, or *pontifex maximus*, and centered around the temple of Jupiter. Diocletian upped the ante by forbidding Roman citizens to move their domicile, so they couldn’t escape the tax collectors.

During those centuries, as a new religion called Christianity percolated through the Empire and into the Roman aristocracy, high-born Christians saw the advantages of centralized Roman religious government. After 395 A.D., when Emperor Constantine became a nominal Christian, the old pagan government became the church’s government. Tribunals vanished (the aristocrat-driven church had no use for “people’s representation”) while the Senate became the Roman Curia of the Catholic Church. To drive that message home, the old bronze doors of the Senate were yanked out of the old Senate building and re-installed in Rome’s first cathedral, St. John Lateran. Christian patrician families wielded the same enormous power that pagan patricians had wielded, and supplied candidates for candidates, bishops and popes. The office of *pontifex maximus* morphed into the Roman Catholic office of pontiff, or Pope. The old electors now became the College of Cardinals, who elected the Pope. In 529 A.D. Emperor Justinian did a Christian update of Roman law. Roman imperial taxes now became tithes demanded by the Roman Curia from outlying territories of the Empire. Later on, as the Holy Roman Empire was created, the old Roman electors were revived as a body that elected the Emperor.

Six hundred years later, that centralized control, and that drain of money from emerging nations to Rome, had become a major irritant in the Empire. It drove England’s departure from the Catholic fold, and later drove the Reformation. Luther’s anti-Roman writings reveal what divisive issues the tithes and the central control were.

With nationalism emerging but with Roman infrastructure still so embedded in Christian life, it was not a stretch for suppressed but workable features of pre-Christian government to re-emerge. This happened during the 14th century Renaissance “rebirth” of classical thought and tradition. Europe’s discovery of something called “Parliament” was actually a post-medieval reinvention of that two-pronged Roman government -- the Senate and that “other” branch representing the people. Under Edward I, England

decided not to adopt a written constitution – she continued operating on the Magna Carta and unwritten common law. But she did adopt the two-house system -- the House of Lords, representing the aristocratic property-owning class, and the House of Commons, representing everybody who was *not* noble and wealthy.

A key event was the Dutch revolution. In the 16th century, as the Dutch seethed under Spanish monarchy, they re-created a Parliament called the Staten-Generaal, with semi-autonomous status for their 17 provinces. In 1548, after the Dutch threw the Spanish out, the northern provinces formed their own Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. The remaining 10 provinces formed another union in the South, becoming Belgium.

In the 17th century, the revived Republic idea also took root in North America, where some of the colonial governments began operating off written constitutions rather than royal charters granted by the British crown. Even while the American Revolution was being fought, the two-house model was being adopted for new state legislatures, and later (after adoption of the U.S. Constitution) for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Old “checks and balances” of executive, legislative and judiciary were re-created. To this day, as Senators from wealth-encrusted old American families handily get themselves elected to office, we are seeing a tradition that dates back 2500 years to the Roman kings.

The 18th-century “little renaissance” – the Age of Reason and Enlightenment with its own classical re-revival – inspired the symbols adopted by American colonists to express the political positioning of their new country. Chief among these were the Roman Goddess of Liberty and the Roman Eagle, who emerged on our shiny new national coinage as the principal ikons of change.

THE LIBERTY CAP

Many Americans are conditioned to think of Goddesses only in connection with fertility, sexuality and the spiritual. Yet throughout pre-Christian history and art, there is an archetype Goddess who embodies the highest powers of law, justice and government. She is found in many cultures, under different names and guises that emblemize different

dynamics of society, from the military to the commercial. I call her the Great Goddess of Government. Because coinage and fiscal policy is a vital duty of any government, it follows that She became a popular image on Greek and Roman coins.

In the absence of billboards and TV, coins circulating in a realm were a handy advertisement's of a rule's policy. Ancient art clearly identified the different Gods and Goddesses by visible attributes -- what they wear or do, or the items they hold. In the great city of Rome, the Government Goddess took many forms. As the maiden warriorress/protector of the city, she was Minerva, armed with spear, helmet and shield. Sometimes she was portrayed driving a *quadriga* (battle chariot pulled by four galloping horses) to the defense of Rome. In another form, she was Roma, the spirit of the city itself. In yet another guise, as Justitia, She embodied the severity of justice, wielding a sword. Latin mottos on the coins usually identified a deity by name, in case the visual bona-fides were not enough for an uneducated Roman.

A more matronly and down-to-earth form of Government Goddess captured the hearts of Romans as well. Juno, mother of Minerva, was the wife of Jupiter, ruler of all Roman Gods. (Both Juno's and Jupiter's names contain the root *ju*, cognate of Latin *jus*, meaning law.) As such, Juno was not only the patroness of marriage and family, but the guardian of the Roman state, especially its fiscal business. Her temple stood on the Roman equivalent of Wall Street, on Capitoline Hill right near the Senate, which was empowered to order up coinage. The Roman mint operated at Juno's temple. As Juno Moneta she was the emblem of commerce, identified by the pair of scales she carried. In fact, Latin *moneta* meant "mint," and from it comes our word "money." Our word "office" comes from Latin *officina*, meaning the mint's workshops, where coins were struck.

Roman women, while legally viewed as being "in the power" of family men, were more liberated and socially active than Greek women, and they did have some say about money and property, running the household, managing slaves, etc. Various powerful Roman women – wives of emperors, Senators, consuls – made their mark on Roman history. After passage of an unpopular sumptuary law limiting the gold and possessions women could hold, an extraordinary thing happened. Thousands of women poured into the streets and staged a massive demonstration for days, stopping traffic and buttonholing

every Senator and consul who came along. The government finally caved, and repealed the law. This social and economic leverage of Roman women probably explains why Rome symbolically put a Goddess, not a God, in charge of the mint.

Last and most important, there was the Goddess of freedom, Libertas (Latin “liberty”). Her temple on the Aventine Hill was historically important to Romans because she embodied the Republic’s victory over monarchy. Her image was a popular one on coins – several emperors, including Galba (who helped rid Rome of Nero), celebrated her copiously on their issues. Libertas was identifiable by her long scepter, symbolizing her authority over herself, and the *pileus*, or “cap of liberty,” that she either wore or held. This cap was worn by slaves when they were freed. Covering your head was a right reserved to freemen, especially the upper class. (Hence the custom, still observed today, of doffing your hat to a superior.) An important feature of Roman culture was this upward mobility it allowed. One could move from slavery to full Roman citizenship, be rewarded for your industriousness and brilliance.

Down through history, female symbols have been used, and abused, by male-dominated cultures as a way to position their policies. It’s a question that many feminist scholars have addressed: why did male rulers use female symbols in this way? Much of that question’s answer is beyond the scope of this study. But where the question concerns coins, I have the following thought: a nation’s trade and fiscal policy have always been balanced against the value assigned to human life by that nation. The lives of a hundred Roman sailors weighed in the balance against the value of a shipload of bronzes or wines or fine Spanish horses. The life of a single slave woman had its weight – perhaps a black woman from Nubia, who tremblingly lit a lamp at the temple of Libertas and looked up at the impassive fire-lit marble face of the Goddess, hoping that she might be freed. The agreement and cooperation of Roman female citizens was necessary to keep the coins rolling, the ships sailing, the armies and bureaucrats paid, because ultimately it was women, not men, who decided the value in coins of a human life. Free mothers have an acute sensibility about the value of life; they will go to any length, and fight fiercely, Athena-like, to protect their children and their neighborhoods. Yet if sufficiently terrorized, a woman could easily buckle under the pressure and decide that a single life – even her own -- was worth very little. Roman history is not

exclusively a chronicle of patriarchy; it is full of the deeds of women, especially aristocratic women, who affected Rome's history for better or worse.

Feminist scholars have also argued that Goddess symbols were relics of an earlier time when matriarchy ruled -- when women themselves struck the coins, and paid the ship-captains, and oiled the wheels of government. If so, this explains why a Roman mint operated by men was parked in the shadow of Juno's temple and put to work striking coins whose ruler portraits were always those of men. Even though men controlled the money, many Roman women quietly made money work for them -- rich women and poor women alike, managing the households, buying the food, penny-pinching if necessary. Women like my mother with her pin money. Women like my German great-grandmother, who couldn't vote for the 19th Amendment in 1920, but who told my great-grandfather, then a member of the state legislature, that if HE didn't vote for the Amendment, he'd better not come home that night. It behooved Roman rulers to give Roman women a symbol to inspire them, to recognize their role in the economic life of the Republic. Now and then, they even put a portrait of their wife on the coin. Hence the figure of Juno Moneta.

In the New World, several versions of the Roman Government Goddess showed up on our shores -- but it was Libertas who took the #1 spot. Shortly after the Revolution, she makes her debut on the obverse (face) of U.S. coins.

The Government Goddess's popularity with our bewigged founders may seem like a contradiction, considering how fiercely many colonial charters had enforced Bible-based law -- law that condemned anything pagan and insisted that women submit to men in all things. After 1776, almost all state constitutions continued to deny civil rights to women and non-Protestants. This apparent contradiction can be explained in part by the fact that the Roman Goddess came to America as an "embedded file," as it were -- a stock item connected with Roman ideas of government that had been laundered through a millennium and a half of Christian civilization.

Liberty's growing popularity in such a conservative Christian environment can be further explained by the fact that individual liberal men in strategic commercial and political jobs may have pushed her positioning.

American coins had already come into being with the earliest colonies. The first Virginia charter of 1607 said that the colonial government “lawfullie may establishe and cawse to be made a coine, to passe currant there betwene the people of those severall Colonies for the more ease of traffique and bargaining betweene and amongst them and the natives there.” But in the beginning, coins were scarce, not standardized or centrally minted. For legal tender, colonists used tobacco or Native American wampum (strings of valuable shell), along with a motley assortment of foreign coins -- British shillings and pence, Irish coppers, Dutch dollars, trading-company tokens. Silver Spanish milled dollars were popular. There was little paper money.

During and after the Revolution, as American-made finally coins appeared in larger numbers, they were stamped by small private mints or individual engravers, often from dies made in Britain. So these private coins, though allowed to circulate by state statute, didn’t represent “state religious policy.” Clearly their designs suggest that liberal sympathies – and a familiarity with ancient Roman coins -- prevailed among some individual engravers, many of whose names we know.

For example, George Wyon of Birmingham, England may have designed the beautiful “Immunis Columbia” coins of 1785-87. Some of the last privately minted coins to be circulated in northern states, the Immunis Columbias were struck in both gold and copper, portraying the Goddess in elegant detail. The motto calls her “Columbia”, a new goddess name for the Americas created from the name Columbus. She is a fusion of Liberty and Juno Moneta, holding a pair of scales in one hand, scepter and liberty cap in the other. Commercial freedom – freedom from royal taxes, freedom to trade with whomever they pleased, buy and sell whatever goods they chose -- was as important to the American colonists as was political freedom.

In 1787, the new U.S. Constitution – written in a long tradition stretching back to Roman and Greek republics -- took coinage out of private hands, vested it in the federal government and established the dollar as our unit of currency. Now Congress continued to put the Goddess on coins, portraying her in classic Roman fashion with scepter and liberty cap. Sometimes she wore the cap. Sometimes the cap hung on the end of the scepter. On the reverse, Congress placed the laurel wreath of authority, worn by Roman emperors. Again, this may not be a contradiction. At the grassroots level, most states

may have continued to establish Protestant religion, but the majority vote among the framers and ratifiers of the U.S. Constitution had not favored established religion. Many of these men were deists and Freemasons, and they worried about the possible consequences of mandating belief, so they had written religion out of the Constitution. The 1789 Bill of Rights barred the federal government from establishing religion.

So, notwithstanding the presence of any prickly Bible-believing element in that early Congress, Liberty was approved by both houses as a design choice.

Liberty became to America what Juno/Roma was to Rome -- the personification of our new republic's spirit. In the early 1800s, designers began putting her profile or bust on the coins, in the styles that Roman rules had been portrayed, rather than using her whole figure. Sometimes, as on the 1839 one-cent pieces, Liberty is young and pert, with a Greek antique look (large nose and eyes, as on Greek vase art). Other times she looks European and matronly, almost dowdy, as on the 1816 large cent. Sometimes her bosom is pushed high and half-bared, as a nod to ladies' fashion of the Napoleonic period. Often she wears the aristocrat's diadem associated with Juno in Roman coins. In the 1833 half-cent piece, the motto is right on the diadem. But always the motto stresses who she is: LIBERTY.

COLONIAL WOMEN'S EXPECTATIONS

Again the question: why a female symbol for a country where even white women were denied the vote and relegated to second-class citizenship? Many colonial women, especially those who came here as indentured servants, were treated little better than slaves during the period (usually 7 years) of their indenture. We won't even speak of the thousands of black women slaves, for whom the very idea of Liberty's cap was meaningless because (unlike the Romans) few American slave-owners ever freed their slaves.

But this question about colonial women is being asked by people of the 21st century, including people like me, who have several centuries of hindsight.

One answer to it may be found in the economies of the American colonies, and in putting ourselves in the shoes of women who lived that economic life. Building a life for

a family, or a religion, in the New World colonies was simply not possible without women's industry, however subjugated those women might still be. Building a life for ANY family is not possible without women's work. This fact hasn't changed anywhere in the world in the last five hundred years. Even today, as developing nations pull themselves out of poverty and dream of having a better life, women's work is irreplaceable. In a recent statement about global impact of AIDS on poor families, the World Bank stated that AIDS is now a world economic issue because the death of a wife and mother from AIDS – the loss of her nurturing for the children, for the goods she created, for the income her work brings in -- represents a major disaster for that family, and a unit of loss to the economy of her country. If you subtract the word "AIDS," you have the situation of the colonies, where the loss of a single hard-working colonial woman spelled disaster not only for her husband and children, but had its impact in the colony where she lived.

Often we think of colonial women as the "dames" in their big houses, forgetting about the masses of farm women -- wives of yeoman farmers in the South who worked like dogs, laboring in the fields to grow tobacco or indigo in the south, or wives of New England freemen who cared for cows, made cheese and butter to sell, farmed sheep and wove woolen textiles. And there were the masses of town women who helped run small businesses – taverns, print shops, grocers.

In *The Colonial Mosaic: American Women 1600-1760*, Jane Kamensky, assistant professor of history at Brandeis University, says:

"The story of colonial settlement is often told as if men were the only actors, but women--as wives, agricultural workers, domestic servants, members of religious congregations, community builders, and mothers of a new generation--were crucial to European settlements just as women in Native American groups were to theirs. Colonial "women's work" was hard, physical labor. In the South, the urgency of farming crops for export stretched a woman's workday from sunrise to sunset (and beyond). It was not much different in New England, though the goal was more often to maintain the family and set aside enough to get through the harsh winter.

"In the 17th and early 18th century, nearly endless toil marked the lives of the majority of American women, regardless of their region, color, or status. Life for women

and men began to change in the late 17th century as slavery became an accepted economic solution. For the planter's wife, it meant a life of increased ease. For the thousands of black women who were brought to the colonies in chains, the exact opposite was true. In the North, cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia saw thousands of new immigrants living side by side with Anglo Americans, enslaved African Americans, and a growing free black community. It was here that so-called "she merchants" began to be a factor in growing professions such as newspaper printing, forging new paths for themselves and helping to fuel booming urban economies.

“But most women in the colonies, enslaved and free, were farm wives; giving birth to child after child, spending all their waking hours doing backbreaking work. Yet, some women entered the era of the revolution with rising expectations. They were marrying whom and when they chose, or choosing to remain unmarried. They were seeking divorces when their marriages became unbearable. They were not only listening to revival preaching, but delivering God's message themselves. They were fleeing cruel masters in search of a better life. The Colonial Mosaic finds that women's voices were heard, though not all in the same tones or claiming the same rights. But they spoke nonetheless, to whomever would listen: to their husbands, to male leaders in their churches and towns, and especially to each other. They were not feminists by today's definition, but they began a tradition of persistence and loyalty that has served women well into the 20th century.”

Writing in *The Colonial American Gazette* (<http://www7.bcity.com/history/>) author and editor: Heather A. Buettner adds this about colonial women:

“Women in America were more successful in their education outside the kitchen than European women. The cottage industry, with a man practicing his trade in the house, gave a woman the opportunity to learn the trade and often the wife could take over the trade if something happened to her husband. Especially with trades that involved travel, wives could run the home for months. Even in the South, many men wrote in their journals how important the support of their competent wives was to them. Women even worked outside the house as domestic servants, a common profession for even middle class families.

“While in the Chesapeake the hard labor made traditional gender roles ambiguous, the small agrarian communities of New England were complimentary to the patriarchal family. In Puritan communities, the woman who kept a good house and took care of all the "women's work" was the one with a good reputation. The woman's domain was well defined in New England. Women presided over kitchens, pantries, cellars, brewhouses, milk houses, butteries, the garden, well, pigpen, henhouse and orchard. Women were able to turn raw materials into usable finished goods and she managed resources, time and labor to the best advantage.

“Women were involved in the everyday affairs of finance as well, bartering and buying on credit at the local shops and being present when their husbands made any major decision regarding property or legal issues. Many men even asked for their wives to give their opinion of a particular decision. Marriage was meant to be a loving union, where a man would overlook the spiritual inferiority of his wife and she would not resent him for being superior. They would each compromise and live in harmony. Sometimes this worked out. Other times it didn't.

“‘Women's work’ was altered in the Chesapeake as well. By the 17th century, English custom distinguished between women's and men's society in agriculture. Men's work included field work while women cared for the garden, dairy and household. In England it was easy for a woman to work solely within her domain, but in the Chesapeake it was more difficult. Few houses had the materials necessary for a woman to transform raw materials into finished products as they did in England. Most women worked beside the men in caring for the tobacco plants. The competition was too great and tobacco cultivation was too labor intensive for the division of labor to be important.”

During the American Revolution, the issue of women's emancipation was already raised (as it was during the French Revolution). The record shows that it was raised by eminent women like Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren, and by hard-toiling women farther down the social ladder as well. White women were told they'd have to wait till the issue of black slavery was resolved. Nevertheless, as the nation expanded west into the territories, and homesteading became possible, women's growing economic power and independence grew with it. In America, coins were handled, saved, hoarded, re-circulated, inherited if they were lucky, by growing numbers of women – millions of

them, by the Civil War. Restrictive as American law still was, it did allow widows and daughters to inherit at least part of the property that they'd worked like dogs to develop, instead of seeing it all go to the oldest son. Establishment of property rights of widows and daughters had been two of the 99 grievances in the Massachusetts Body of Liberties.

Land ownership was especially important to early American women. In the territories, even the poorest immigrant woman could hope to own a piece of land – ownership that would have been impossible for her in an economically stagnant Europe, where most land was owned by a handful of wealthy people, and entry into trades was tied up by old and powerful guilds. My mother's mother Azora Flinn and her Irish husband, both descendants of middle-class townfolk, scratched out a 160-acre homestead near Okaton, South Dakota that they could never have owned if they'd lived in Europe. I remember seeing family photos of the homestead – my grandfather sitting on his cowpony, my grandmother standing by a picket fence that kept the cows out of her garden, my mother and her sister as children huddled on the dusty doorstep of the sod house. (Ownership of land by non-whites was another matter, but with time, this issue too would be dealt with.)

It's my thinking that American founders who held the reins of power were forced to recognize this fact. They weren't just motivated to put Liberty's image out there on those coins because it was an "old Roman Republican tradition". They had to go home and make peace with their wives, their sisters, their other female relatives, and be held accountable by them, just as my great-grandfather had to go home and face the music during the women's suffrage vote in 1920. Liberty on those coins was a tribute – however grudging – to women's rising expectations and their economically indispensable lives.

It's also not surprising that Goddess images spun off onto some state seals. Inevitably, they found their way into civic architecture across the country – courthouses, city halls, government buildings, museums, even schools and public libraries – any that were built in the neo-classic style. In Texas, for example, the Great Goddess stood on the state Capitol dome as Justice, holding a sword in one hand and the Lone Star in the other. Murals, sculptured friezes, posters of the period – all show her busy with the business of America, striding along with swirling robes, or driving a chariot, or holding a

sword, or standing with torch upraised, or hovering protectively in the air over pioneers and their covered wagons, or shielding two female allegorical figures named Science and Industry.

In Europe, a similar popular fervor had made her the ikon of the French Revolution. The well-known painting “Liberty Leading the People” by Eugene Delacroix shows her in a Dionysian mode -- wild eyes, streaming hair and bared bosom, fiercely leading the revolutionary troops into battle. French women were briefly emancipated before the Revolution failed, before Napoleon took over and the Napoleonic code put women back in the old second-class status. Yet a little of that French spirit crossed the Atlantic -- a few early 19th-century coins portray our own Liberty with mildly streaming hair, though her American image was more Doric and restrained than the image seen in France.

Liberty’s popularity in both France and America led French Freemason thinker Edouard Rene Lefebvre de Laboulaye, who opposed slavery, to conceive the idea of a bronze colossus of Liberty. His friend, sculptor Auguste Bartholdi, created the Statue of Liberty as a gift from the French people to the American people. When the U.S. freed its slaves, Laboulaye and Bartholdi felt that our country finally deserved to have their Goddess. The idea met with some outcry in the U.S. In 1880, the *American Catholic Quarterly* denounced Liberty and her torch, contending they received light 'not from Christ and Christianity, but from heathenism and her gods.’’ Nevertheless the disassembled statue arrived here by ship in 1885. Joseph Pulitzer, Jewish owner of the *New York World*, welcomed Liberty with giant headlines: THE GREAT GODDESS COMES! After donation of the island where she stands, and construction of her base, the Statue was unveiled in 1887 in the midst of a colossal celebration, with President Grover Cleveland cutting the ribbon, millions of people in the streets, 21-gun salutes, fireworks and the first ticker-tape parade in American history. It was an apogee for our American Goddess.

Ironically, American women were to be denied the vote for another 23 years.

A SACRED ANIMAL

In 1787, the coin designers and Congress took another classical symbol, the Roman eagle, and put it on the reverse of a Massachusetts cent. After that, other eagle images appeared so regularly that the Eagle became our national heraldic animal. Sometimes the eagle is perched or flying; more often it's the formalized "spread eagle."

Actually, this great bird had first appeared on the United States seal. The 1776 First Continental Congress had requested a committee to come up with a Great Seal. In those days a Seal was legally important for any nation, stamped into hot wax on government documents to guarantee their official nature and authenticity. The committee, including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, took four years and much wrangling to accomplish this task. Franklin's suggestion that the wild turkey be our official bird was rejected. Jefferson's hand-sketched design, a cumbersome thing full of Goddesses, was also rejected.

Finally it was delegate Charles Thomson, the quiet hardworking but greatly respected secretary of the Continental Congress, who stepped in and broke the design deadlock. He sketched the now-familiar image, with a spread eagle grasping a leafy branch in the left talon and a bundle of arrows in the right talon. It was simple, dramatic, impactful – in a word, it was good design and good positioning, as a public symbol is supposed to be.

In the ancient world, every God and Goddess had a sacred animal as formal companion and guardian. Down through history, the Great Government Goddess was partial to birds. According to Jane Ellen Harrison in *Prolegomena*, birds were sacred to Athena. In Athens, her bird was the owl; in other Greek city-states, it was the hoopoe or diving bird. In Rome, the peacock was often associated with Juno. Yet the eagle, as a predator, was a war-bird, so there is a strong tie between the Eagle symbol and the Government Goddess in her warrior mode. In the United States, Liberty and the war Eagle became inseparably paired.

Doubtless the eagle inspired General Washington and the Continental Army because Roman legions had followed eagle standards into battle.

Yet the eagle symbol has a deeper meaning, a religious/authoritarian side to it. As the bird sacred to Jupiter, it became the heraldic emblem of the Roman emperor and his divinity -- he governed Rome in Jupiter's name. When Rome went Christian, the eagle

was Christianized, becoming the symbol of Christ's government on Earth, through the Holy Roman Emperor. The Gospel of John emphasizes the divinity of Christ, which is why the eagle symbol became associated with John the Evangelist. (The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke embody other traditions connected to other symbols, namely the angel, lion and bull.) Indeed, without the decision to deify Jesus, made in the 4th century by the Nicene Council, Christianity couldn't have handily taken over the Roman Empire. Later, termed the "St. John's eagle", it became a heraldic device of Holy Roman dynasties (Hapsburgs, Romanoffs, Hohenzollerns, etc.) To this day the native eagle species of Europe, now endangered, is called the imperial eagle.

So it's not surprising to see the Roman Eagle popping up in the United States. According to *Colonial and Revolutionary Lineages of America*, the Society of the Cincinnati created a diamond-studded eagle medal which they awarded to George Washington. For a time, this medal was passed down to succeeding Presidents. All we did to Americanize the eagle was add the "bald" head of our own North American species. The wartime authoritarian and aristocratic spirit of the eagle symbol, its role as a symbol of federal power, balanced the more humanist/popular peacetime appeal of the Liberty symbol.

Indeed, the Eagle says much about the aristocratic will to establish a powerful new sphere of influence in the New World, that fired the spirits of American revolutionaries so powerfully. The Roman Republic had strong central, or federal, controls that could be translated into what Americans were creating. It's no wonder that European aristocrats like Lafayette and Frederick the Great admired the United States. Washington himself came from an aristocratic British family whose coat-of-arms may have provided a motif (the stripes) for the first American flag. As *Colonial and Revolutionary Lineages of America* points out, many early American families were patricians, proud of their aristocratic European heritage, tracing their lineages to European kings and emperors. (That trend continues among some Republican families today, notably the Bush family, who trace their lineage back to Charlemagne and the Caesars.) In most early U.S. states, the constitutions limited membership of the *populus* by forbidding voting and office-holding to white, male Protestant freemen who owned property. They excluded not only women and slaves, but also tribal peoples, indentured

servants, prisoners, the poor, the homeless, and others. In other words, limited suffrage put political power in the hands of a landed patriarchal American aristocracy – exactly where power had been vested during the Roman Republic.

The Eagle’s arrows and olive branch symbolized the balance of war and peace, with the arrows representing the 13 states.

One immediate inspiration for the bundle of arrows probably came from strong Dutch presence in the colonies, and from the 17th-century Dutch Republic, formed when the Protestant Low Countries threw off the rule of Spanish Catholic kings, inspiring anti-monarchists all over Europe. Our colonial coin designers had probably seen Dutch dollars bearing this device – two sheafs of arrows laid across each other in an X, totaling 17, representing the 17 Dutch provinces when they first united against the Spanish, before they split into Netherlands and Belgium. In each bundle, the Dutch arrows were laid parallel to each other, not tied together -- a symbolic way of saying that the individual provinces retained a degree of independence within the Dutch Republic, each with its own government. But since monarchy remained a strong tradition in this emerging nation, the Dutch arrows were guarded by a royal lion. Charles Thomson sketched the arrows as they appear on this Dutch coin, i.e. bunched parallel.

But when the final version of the U.S. Seal was published, it’s clear that the Committee had made a design change. The arrows were now crossed over each other – in the language of heraldry, this cross is called “in saltire” – and held tightly together at the center of the X by the Eagle’s claws. It’s possible that our coin designers had seen this in-saltire design on Spanish coins that circulated in the colonies.

In the language of heraldry, such seemingly minor details, or any changes in minor detail, convey a whole world of repositioning. Arrows are weapons. A sheaf of arrows symbolizes kinship and brotherhood achieved by war; it also symbolizes collective strength of provinces, states, tribes, etc. through achieving a hard-fought unity. Arrows have a long history in European civic heraldry, with one notable version showing the arrows in saltire and tied together where they crossed. This version appears on the coat-of-arms of Ferdinand II of Spain and his queen Isabel, next to the right foot of the black St. John’s eagle. Since symbolism is always deliberate even in its details, the open crossed arrows with their central binding represent a war to achieve greater federalism

and centralized control. This symbol certainly represented Ferdinand and Isabel's goal as they warred to unite several culturally distinct regions of Iberia under their crown, installing the Inquisition there, and driving out Islam and Judaism. The right side symbolizes "best," "most righteous". Therefore, putting the arrows by the Eagle's right talon signifies that war is preferred to peace in order to achieve policy aims.

In its most aboriginal European form, the arrows may have symbolized the original Italian tribes who united under the Roman Republic, after a period of civil war.

So, not surprisingly, when the new United States government put the arrow symbol on its Seal and its coins in 1791, it chose the saltire-and-tied version – a foreshadowing of the huge struggle between growing federal power and states' rights that lay ahead. Our states, with their constitutions limiting suffrage so drastically, had always been bastions of Protestant religious conservatism; for the next two centuries, it would require centralized federal power and help from the courts in order to separate church and state, and end civil-rights abuses like slavery, oppression of women, child labor, etc. The United States also put the arrows in the right talon, sending the message that we did not shrink from war to achieve our goals. Indeed, when the Seal was designed, the American colonies were already at war with Britain.

An interesting aside on the arrows: in 1936, when the Spanish Nationalist Falange provoked the Spanish Civil War and moved towards power under Generalissimo Franco, it chose the saltire-and-tied arrows of Ferdinand as a symbol, because it had a similar federalist goal, which included crushing all provincial independence movements and ending all religious, cultural and linguistic diversities. The Falange wracked Spain with three years of civil war to achieve its goals. When Franco died in 1975 and fascism ended, one of the first things the Spanish government did was redesign its national coat of arms, removing the now-hated arrows; today, old regions of the country once so forcibly incorporated into Ferdinand and Isabella's "Spain" – the Basque provinces, Andalucia, Galicia, Catalonia, Cantabria -- now enjoy semi-autonomy.

By comparison, the United States has never given up its claim to incorporate territories and maintain its historic borders by war, if necessary. So the arrows have stayed in the right talon, where they started out.

That related Roman symbol, the fasces, also popped up in American civic heraldry. The word *fascia* could mean a bundle of arrows. But the fasces was also a tightly wrapped bundle of rods, sometimes with an ax tied into it, sometimes without the ax, that symbolized the highest government power in Rome. On public occasions it was carried ahead of Roman magistrates. Latin *fasces* means bundle, as well as union or league or confederacy.

But the fasces has a grim punishment side to it. The rods were used for public flogging (Jesus was scourged with rods Roman style in the New Testament, as was the British queen Bodaecia after her capture by the Roman army). So the fasces symbolized not only national unity, but also government authority over individuals and the government's perceived power and right to punish. Ordinary citizens who committed serious crimes, including disobedient soldiers, were flogged to death. For aristocrats, the ax symbolized beheading, a quicker and more merciful death (beheading remained the popular "humane" Western punishment for aristocrats till well after the French Revolution). Without the ax, the fasces symbolized the state's choice to be benign. For non-citizens, like slaves or prisoners of war, more ignominious and painful forms of execution were devised by the Romans, like being nailed to the *crux* (cross) and left to die slowly in the sun. In modern times, the fasces was revived as a symbol by Benito Mussolini – hence the name of his Italian Nationalist movement, fascism.

In view of the fact that capital punishment was always integral to American justice from the beginning, it's interesting that the fasces didn't make its appearance on American coins till after 1900. The 1932 Washington-head quarter has the Eagle sitting on a fasces with no ax, denoting benignity of justice. The 1916 dime displays the axed version, albeit softened by a branch of olive leaves. In government architecture, a pair of imposing bronze fasces framed the Speaker's podium in the House of Representatives -- just to make sure no American missed the message that Roman severity was revived in that legislative chamber. Conspiracy-loving liberals like to cite the fasces' debut on our shores as evidence that the U.S. was becoming a fascist empire in its own right.

THE TREE OF PEACE

The second powerful influence on our institutions of government and on the Liberty symbol – one that is unrecognized today because it was censored out of our official history -- was the Native-American influence.

To hear some of today's historians tell it, our colonial founders somehow pulled democracy out of a hat. These historians never stop to think that our founders had no personal experience with any real-life "democracies." Europe, still crammed with haughty monarchies and empires, provided no real-life models. To get some measure of our founders' dilemma, we can ponder the huge obstacles to creating post-Communist democracy that are faced today by the former Soviet republics, who have no personal experience in running a free country or free economy. Many of our founders were well-read on the Roman and Greek republics, but this was armchair stuff. How could they make republican government work in real life, in their own time?

As many early documents show, trade with the tribes-- and political relations with them -- were a powerful educator for men like Benjamin Franklin and William Penn, whose liberal ideas had their influence in our founding. Despite the bloody "Indian wars" that did happen, many educated colonists lived closer with native peoples than many American historians admit today. There is a long list of treaties and early federal acts concerning trade with the tribes, that runs from the 1780s clear through the mid-1800s, showing us the economic clout and political influence that native peoples had in our early times.

Native American tribes taught myriad things to our European forebears. They taught them about sheer survival on a new continent -- about trade and travel routes, about weather and animals and fishing and food plants, about uses of native trees, about location of ore bodies and other natural resources. They taught European colonists the art of war as practiced by the tribes -- freewheeling guerrilla and sniper warfare, which colonial militias used with devastating success against the British, who were locked into traditional stand-up strategies of Europe. A significant part of this body of information passed from native women to white European women – a fact that many historians gloss over. In New England, for example, there was a strict division between "women's work" and "men's work," with New England colonial women customarily the ones in charge of gardening and food preservation. So it was they, not their men, who learned about

pumpkins and corn from the native people. European woman colonists also learned from native women about the uses of North American medicinal herbs, since doctors were few and family medical knowledge and care customarily resided with the women. Most of these drugs, like digitalis, are still medically used in the U.S. today.

Most importantly, the native peoples taught European colonists about people's government that worked. I first learned this from mixed-blood historian Paula Underwood, author of *The Walking People*. Underwood traces her lineage back to a Seneca chief who was tribal liaison to Benjamin Franklin. Ms. Underwood died several years ago, but I had the good fortune to interview her in 1982 when I was researching native American history for my historical novel *One Is the Sun*. Paula Underwood describes these contributions in an excerpt from her *Iroquois Roots of the Constitution*, published in 1996 in *Perspectives on Business and Global Change*:

“For those who descend from Native American roots or from early Colonial families or, like me, from both, the influence of Native American thought on the shaping of our Nation will probably not be a surprise! ...Many, perhaps most, of our Founding Fathers were intimately familiar with Indian governance structures. This was especially true of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, the Adamses (Samuel, John, and Abigail), and John Rutledge. Specifically, Franklin, who was Indian Agent for the Colony of New York, carefully studied Iroquois/Haudonosaunee civic organization under the Great Law of Peace and clearly used it as the basis for his Albany Plan of Union published in 1754, under which he hoped to unite the Colonies. The Albany Plan was used as the basis for the constitution of the Colony (later the State) of New York and later became the basis for the Articles of Confederation, which provided in turn the basis for the U.S. Constitution.”

The Constitution of the Six Nations, called The Great Binding Law (*Gayanashagowa*), was an actual written document created by a great native lawgiver, Dekanawidah. The Great Law of Peace itself – meaning the tradition of law from which this constitution came – was very old. According to Underwood: “Some date the Great Law of Peace as early as 1054 -- a date my tradition agrees with. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) League themselves say the Great Law is about 1,000 years old. From the beginning it included and still includes concepts such as democratic representation, the

right to impeach officials, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, prohibition against illegal search and seizure. It also included equal rights for women and for all men, the rights of children, and responsibility for the environment.”

Most North American native cultures revere the individual, as well as the individual’s personal vision and conscience. They did not impose a single religion in the European theocratic manner. Consequently many of the tribes had varying forms of real democratic government, with women and men voting individually for elected representatives on governing councils and the council chiefs accountable directly to the people. Their democracies were based on the council circle, not on the type of pyramidal hierarchy established in Europe. Strong law traditions were found not only among Northeastern tribes, and Southern confederations like the Cherokee, with whom I am distantly related, but some Western tribes as well -- notably the Northern Cheyennes, with whom I am also distantly related. According to Northern Cheyenne author/historian Hyemeyohsts Storm, as well as white anthropologist Peter Powell, the Cheyennes had an equally remarkable system of law and elected representation that their traditions say came from a great lawgiver named Sweet Medicine.

Women participated fully in some of these tribal governments, serving as chiefs and military leaders. Rumors of this fact may have reached the keen ears of colonial women’s advocates like Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams, inspiring them to demand that white females be enfranchised in America.

With real-life native confederacies like the Cherokee Nation and the Iroquois League right under their noses, it’s not surprising that the 13 states – who had already governed themselves under their own state constitutions for five or six years – decided to confederate in 1781, as per an agreement called the Articles of Confederation. Indeed, they were urged to confederate by the Iroquois chiefs, whose message was delivered by Benjamin Franklin. The American Confederacy lasted seven years, till the present U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1788.

Native culture inspired other stealthy civic borrowings too. Historian Jack Weatherford lists some of them in his landmark work *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*. Borrowings included the caucus (from the Algonquian word *caucauasu*). Also borrowed was the title of “Speaker,” used by the Six

Nations councils, as well as the 4-year term of office (in the native world, the number 4 was as paramount as the number 3 among Christians). Even the U.S. President's title "chief of state" was appropriated straight from the tribes. "Chief" is a tribal title; no "chiefs of state" were to be found in Europe!

All these native ideas and practices were nailed like new clapboard onto the old Roman frame of government with its two bodies. The Native American concept of the governing circle itself – with everyone sitting around a council fire – may have been briefly borrowed for symbolic use for the first U.S. flag, which displayed 13 stars in a circle. But when it came to actual government practice, the circle – with its implications of absolute equality all the way around -- was probably shunned by our founders (aristocrats and churchmen alike) as too egalitarian for their tastes. Even the most enlightened of our founders preferred the hierarchial type of government created by the classical Republics and continued through the Roman and Holy Roman Empires.

Later on, as the United States went through the "Great Awakening" and grew more Christianized, many Americans felt a great reluctance to admit to any vestige of this pagan heritage – because of their churchy antipathies to anything non-Christian. Little by little, the Native American contribution was edited out of our public record. Among other things, how could one talk honestly of Native American women chiefs, or Iroquois women impeaching bad chiefs out of office, when white American women were still denied the vote? Doubtless some key founding documents referring to Native American input in our government have been deliberately destroyed or hidden. For a long time, the letters and documents that did survive could be found only in obscure archives – proving once again that history books are always written by the winners of wars.

Not surprisingly, though, the native contribution left an indelible footprint in one highly visible place: on our coins, in the form of a Liberty in Native American dress.

FEATHER HEADDRESSES

Long before the American Revolution, European artists had become romantically infatuated with "noble savages" in the New World.

Following an ancient tradition that portrayed continents as Goddesses, the Age of Enlightenment created a new symbol – the Goddess of the New World. Old female goddess named Europa, Africa and Asia were now joined by a new deity named America, Columbia, etc. The name America was inspired by Italian navigator Americus Vespucci, who had explored American waters after Columbus. On maps and in book illustrations, She was splendidly crowned with feathers, carrying a bow in one hand and an ax in the other, wearing Europeanized versions of Native American dress. Animal companions of America were New World sacred animals, including llamas and rattlesnakes.

Her choice of weapons was not an artist's whim – there were actual reports that some native tribes had their New World amazons who were expert with the bow. These amazons inspired Spanish explorers to create the name California, whose shores they explored at an early date; Califa was the name of the original Amazon queen as reported by Greek historian Herodotus. My own Native American relatives shared some oral traditions of warrioresses they called the Arrow Girls. Peter Powell in his anthology study *Sweet Medicine*, and Benjamin Capps in his *Woman Chief*, related that a few of these fierce women fighters were still active on the Plains in the late 1800s.

At first this Native American Goddess was portrayed as voluptuous and wild-looking, sitting naked on an armadillo, as per the famed European engraving by Adrien Collaert II after Marten de Vos, "Personification of America," 1765-1775. Later She grew more dignified and matronly, wearing a toga-like robe with tribal fringes and ornaments. Because monarchy ruled the Americas in those times, She was known as the Indian Queen or the Indian Princess.

However, after the American Revolution ended in 1783 and the colonists had thrown off British monarchy, our coin designers radically repositioned the Indian Queen. She was now considered to symbolize the United States only. And She morphed into a severe and classical mode, albeit with recognizable "Indian" details. In 1987-88, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Joshua Witherle designed cent and half-cent coins with a standing guardian figure on the obverse. The figure has no identifying gender characteristics; on its head is a little pouf of feathers. It wears a Roman-looking kilt and sandals. It holds a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other. The figure is minimal and

geometric, not at all classically Roman, suggesting that the coin designer may have copied it from a wampum belt or other tribal work. But the figure is clearly based on the “Indian Queen”. In the Native American world, the bow symbolizes a people, while the arrow symbolizes the laws as created by a people’s consensus – a perfect emblem for true democracy.

New York State coins doted on the Indian Queen. In 1787, a N. Y. coin showed the same minimalist figure holding a tomahawk (symbol of war) in one hand and an unstrung bow (symbol of peace) in the other. Another New York State issue, the so-called Nova Eborac series, portrays a wonderful hybrid figure – a splendid robed Liberty crowned with big feathers, seated in the Roman fashion with Her scepter, shield and liberty cap. Another 1787 coin shows the Roman Goddess with her scales and the Native American Goddess with her tomahawk; both females are shown guarding the coat-of-arms of New York State.

A Confederatio copper, believed to be struck from dies made by George Wyon of England, has the Indian Queen on its obverse. She is identifiable by her bow and quiver of arrows, and the motto AMERICANA INIMICA TYRANNIS. In other words, the Native American Liberty was styled as the “enemy of tyranny.”

In 1792, for one of the first Congressional issues, Robert Birch designed a silver cent with a beautiful and unusual Liberty head on it. Her Delacroix-style streaming hair and Her big Native American disc earrings frame a distinctive Native American profile with a high-bridged nose. As late as the mid-1800s, there were gold dollar and 3-dollar pieces with Liberty crowned by a chief’s feather headdress. For the 1854 dollar, James Longacre designed the headdress as a hybrid: the Juno diadem with feathers. In the 1865 dollar, the headdress looks more authentic. In both versions, the feathers stand up straight and stiff, as was common among Eastern, Mexican and South American tribes, instead of trailing back over the shoulders as worn on the northern Plains. On the reverse of these Indian Queen dollars is a wreath of Native American plants -- corn and tobacco and cotton. (Some species of cotton were native to the Americas.)

In the language of symbol -- especially on coins, where you only get two shots to make your national policy statement -- the intent is always very deliberate. Clearly, by the 1850s, these Americanized images of Liberty were not mere holdovers from “Indian

Queens” of vanished monarchy. Nor were they flights of European fancy about “noble savages”. To me, these images are patent proof that Native American founding influence in government was still known and recognized in white men’s high political circles – not only to designers and engravers but to Congress, who – in a manner that might be termed “hypocritical” today -- approved these designs even as the United States was ending its era of friendly trade with the tribes and adopting total war as a way of capturing the tribes’ lands. Persistent use of the chief’s feather headdress, in a coin positioning long reserved for emperors and kings, suggests that Congress also remembered dimly that women had served in high political office in some tribes.

Meanwhile, other Native American symbols had also found their way onto American coins.

One of these is the Tree of Peace, used by the Six Nations to symbolize their own law and government tradition. The Tree is found on a series of coins struck in England 1653-60 and circulated in Massachusetts before the Revolution, when a law was finally passed outlawing wampum as legal tender. It became known as the Tree of Liberty, and found its way into other civic arts, like state seals and flags (notably the Vermont Pine Tree). The Iroquois gave John Hancock the name *Karanduawn* (Great Tree). Indeed, it’s possible that our founders’ choice of the Eagle as a national symbol was bolstered by this great bird’s popularity with the Six Nations, who portrayed it in their own tradition as guardian of the Tree of Peace. The Thunderbird held as exalted a place with native peoples as it had with the Roman Empire and later European rulers.

The bundle of arrows was also an old Native American symbol of law – sacred to the Iroquois as a symbol of their confederacy, and also to some Western tribes as a symbol of law. Among the Cheyennes, the four sacred arrows had a more spiritual meaning, representing the laws given to them by Sweet Medicine. The Cheyenne arrows were always burned and new ones made in a great ceremony held every four years when the Cheyenne confederacy – the Suhtai, Tsistsistas and other bands -- met in a great Council to review all their laws.

Charles Thomson, the Continental Congress secretary who came up with the Great Seal design, is a key person in the Arrow scenario. He may have been impressed by the Iroquois arrow symbol. When he did the Great Seal sketch incorporating the

arrows symbol, he may well have intended to synthesize the European and Native American traditions. Thomson was one of the delegates who knew and respected the tribes, so much so that the Delawares adopted him. When Iroquois chiefs visited the Continental Congress on July 11, 1776, and were received with great demonstrations of respect by the white delegates, Thomson carefully wrote this event into the Congressional records. The chiefs were told by the Congress that Americans and Iroquois would hopefully act “as one people” – a thought that may have inspired Thomson to think about synthesizing the two law traditions.

But by the late 1800s, as the last of the free tribes were being herded into prisoner-of-war camps called “reservations,” any public consciousness of these events had long since vanished. Native American Liberty was vanishing from our coins – replaced by the more familiar male “Indian-head” issues. These were minted in the late 1800s and early 1900s; a few of the nickels still circulate today. On the Indian-head nickel, the man is wearing that trailing eagle-feather bonnet of the Plains. His expression is sad, somber. On the reverse a buffalo stands with head lowered in submission. Both images reflect a profound defeat. But the man was simply a masculinized version of Native American Liberty.

Native Liberty also had her spin-offs in the civic arts. The most notable example was the bronze statue of Lady Freedom that was placed atop the Capitol Dome in Washington D.C. in 1863. Created by American sculptor Thomas Crawford, this 19-foot-tall statue is one of the most magnificent works of 19th-century American art. Another wonderful “half breed,” she stands atop a globe and fasces, wearing her rich fringed Native American robes and a Greek helmet crowned with flowing feathers. Periodically Lady Freedom shows the effects of weather and neglect, and is taken down for a cleanup. A silent witness of those forgotten pagan contributions to American democracy, she has endured a century and a half of lightning-strikes and East Coast hurricanes – and endured them better than the public oblivion to which she has been consigned.

Below her feet, in the chamber of the House of Representatives, there are 23 statues of great historic lawgivers, installed in the 1950s. Even in those constrained and conservative times, the U.S. had become pluralistic enough to include Jews (Maimonides

and Moses) and Muslims (Suleiman the Great) among these statues, along with the de rigeur Christians (Edward I and Justinian). But there was no room in this sculptured pantheon of U.S. law for Dekanawidah, who wrote the Six Nations Constitution that inspired our own.

Paradoxically, Lady Freedom meant little to the vanquished tribes rotting on the reservations. She meant little to black slaves, who had seen her as a symbol brandished by their Southern white owners during the Civil War. (Southern history tells one horrible story of a Liberty monument used to hang black men during a lynching.) She even meant little to women still festering for emancipation. Indeed, many of them may have hated Liberty as a symbol of white male oppressors. Our country's now-habitual use of the symbol was more and more at odds with the reality of what many disenfranchised people living in the U.S. now felt and wanted and needed. It seemed like the country was out of balance – more invested into the Eagle (war) than into the Goddess (peace).

SYMBOLS THAT AREN'T THERE

A third mighty influence on our government was a dawning of Christian liberalism. Along with any humanizing effects of classical tradition and native American tradition, Christian liberalism also helped to humanize our newborn country and move it away from iron theocracy, through a long gamut of desperately needed social reforms.

While Congress was placing a bronze statue of a feathered Goddess on top of the Capitol, many of our Protestant Bible-believing citizens still saw themselves as latter-day descendants of the Israelites standing on the threshold of a new Zion. The Atlantic symbolized their Jordan River, and the North American continent their “land of milk and honey.” They believed that God had given this continent, in exchange for their agreement to abide by Bible-based law. European oppression by other religions had been their sojourn in Egyptian slavery. In their minds, “God’s gift of the land to them” automatically extinguished all native title to land and tribal sovereignty, as well as any territorial claims by other religions. It gave them a perceived right to determine the nation’s course through legislation and social pressure “in God’s name.” In the Old Testament, the Israelites gave no quarter when they warred on Canaanites and other

pagan tribes; the Bible brims with accounts of atrocities and massacres, entire populations being put to the sword. Some conservative American Protestants felt justified in doing likewise to America's pagan enemies, notably the native American tribes.

Yet some church members were agonizing at human-rights abuses committed in the name of the new Zion.

Colonial persecutions of Quakers and other smaller sects had caused widespread revulsion, and fueled powerful dissenters like William Penn to go out on a limb with demands that all forms of Christianity be tolerated. Thomas Jefferson and Roger Williams went a step farther, demanding tolerance for Jews, Muslims and pagans. Slavery was already becoming a hot issue among Christians. The Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses and sympathizers, started even before the Revolution and continued till the Civil War, ultimately helping over a hundred thousand escaped slaves to reach freedom. Less heated, but festering, were issues growing around women, child labor and native human rights.

By 1789, as the lid of revolution blew off in France and wicker baskets heaped high with severed heads, our founders took note of the fierce anticlerical spirit driving European revolutions. Some evidently saw the danger ahead. If the newborn United States of America did not make religious liberty into a national policy, the nation might dissolve back into states with established churches. Without unity on this issue, the United States might perish in religious wars as horrible as the ones that wracked Europe for centuries. In the late 1780s, Congress realized that potential new territories to the west were populated with many unbelieving refugees from the States, who now hesitated to enter the union without guarantees of religious liberty. So the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, under which the territory of Ohio came into the union, specifically guaranteed this right – not only to whites, but to native tribes as well.

After that came the Bill of Rights and its first 10 amendments, starting with that bold statement: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Bold as the First Amendment was (by comparison with 2500 years of Roman and Christian imperial theocracy), it was not understood by Americans of 1789 as we understand it today. In practice, the states still cherished their autonomy as “states,” and regarded the First Amendment as applying only to the federal government; it would take a civil war and another two centuries of court struggles before the First Amendment was applied more uniformly in every state of the union. Most of our history’s tensions between growing federal power and sovereign rights of states had its roots in efforts by the Supreme Court to reinterpret the First Amendment according to volatile social change, and to re-enforce it. Slave states justified slavery by pointing to the Old Testament and the Law of Moses, which permitted slavery to the Israelites. More to the point, slavery had been legal in republican and Christian Rome, as well as in the Holy Roman Empire. Serfdom, a form of slavery, was the economic basis for medieval society. When Protestantism came to Europe, Protestant aristocracy clung to their serfs. This old habit meant that slavery would die very hard in America. Denial of suffrage to women was justified on similar Biblical grounds.

For many decades after 1789, as new states and territories continued to enter the U.S., evangelical Protestants mounted huge efforts to missionize the large populations of “unbelieving” pioneers and native peoples living in the West. This westward movement of Christian belief, called “The Great Awakening,” kept stride with westward flowings of the frontier. That emerging national belief in “eminent domain” -- a perceived God-given right of the United States to occupy the entire continent -- had a strong Protestant and Biblical hue. Denied their empire in Europe, the Protestants would now establish empire in America. During this period, despite growing federal pressure, many states only paid lip service to the idea of “liberty for all Christians” and clung to their established churches. For example, Connecticut didn’t disestablish its Congregational Church till around 1840.

Through the 1850s, in spite of the strong Christianizing movement, our national civic heraldry continued to feature those classical ikons on our coins. Yet there were growing numbers of Americans who believed – as many colonists had believed -- that God (as defined by them) commanded them to protect Christian religion through civil government. They interpreted the First Amendment as barring the federal government

from disestablishing any state religion, and as permitting the states' free exercise of established varieties of Protestantism. For the moment, the U.S. Supreme Court was agreeing with them. Henceforth they would regard American "liberalism" as their deadly enemy, and link it with another hated enemy, "paganism". About this time, the word "liberal" entered our political language as an unflattering epithet because its adherents had loved the pagan Goddess of Liberty.

As America lurched towards the Civil War, coin designers' use of that liberty cap started stirring some hot debate. How could we display this symbol when our country permitted slavery? In 1855, when Lady Freedom was first designed for the Capitol dome, the artist had her wearing the cap. But Secretary of War Jefferson Davis objected on behalf of states that supported slavery. So the cap disappeared from Lady Freedom's head – replaced by those Native American feathers.

Ironically, the Southern Confederacy laid its own claim to the liberty cap. To them, it represented states' rights, not the rights of slaves.

In 1861, when rebel forces took over the Southern federal mint at Dahlonega, GA, the Confederacy used captured dies and whatever bullion was on hand to coin thousands of gold dollars with capped Liberty heads on them. That same year, the South also commissioned a half-dollar of its own that displayed a classic seated Liberty holding the cap. The reverse showed the cap as a crest for the Confederate arms. According to *A Guide Book of United States Coins*, this design was approved by President Jefferson Davis, who had nixed the cap for the Washington statue. In 1861, 500 of these half-dollars were coined by a New Orleans mint. But the Northern blockade, which cut the South off from a steady supply of bullion, made it impossible for the Confederacy to launch its own coinage. The half-dollar dies were found gathering dust in private hands after the Civil War.

A similar fate met Confederate designs for a cent, commissioned to a Philadelphia engraver named Robert Lovett. Fearing he'd be prosecuted for treason by the U.S. government, Lovett delivered not to deliver the job. He hid the coins and dies in his basement. Ironically, this Confederate cent also featured the Goddess wearing that controversial cap.

In other arts, the North/South struggle over the symbol continued. The South plastered Liberty on several of its state republic flags, notably Alabama's. In the North, the Copperheads -- Northern members of the Democratic party who opposed Lincoln and wanted peace -- wore buttons cut from copper coins depicting Liberty. On both sides, war memorials to fallen soldiers sprang up everywhere, including Gettysburg, with the Goddess of Liberty standing stark against many skylines, along those many fields and forests where so many millions of men died.

Even individual soldiers fought with the Goddess's name on their lips. On Sept 1st, 1864, W.R. Clack wrote a letter to his family filled with the fulsome prose of the times:

“ It is hard to conceive of the great joy that will animate and enliven the hearts of the people when this cruel slaughter of Americans by Americans are ended. Where the marshal music of the hateful fife and drum are superseded by the sweet songs of peace. When the march of armies gives way to the march of industry and civilization. When spears are turned into pruning hooks and swords into plowshares, and the Goddess of Liberty folding away forever the bloodstained banner of Civil War wares upon her wounded bosom the healing olives branch of peace.”

In Congress, however, as the Civil War ground on, Christian lobbying was making headway in coin design. A political tug of war over our national motto broke out. Since the late 1700s, the main motto had been LIBERTY. Now and then, E PLURIBUS UNUM (Latin for “one from many”) was used. But during the Civil War, as religious sentiments flared around a horrendous conflict that left a quarter of the country devastated and millions of soldiers and civilians dead, the motto IN GOD WE TRUST suddenly appeared for the first time – on our 1864 quarter dollar. From then on, the two mottoes see-sawed back and forth in an atmosphere of growing controversy.

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

Meanwhile there had been a fourth influence on American government and law, one that was more underground. This was Freemasonry. It caused a war of a different kind.

Modern Freemasonry was perhaps only a few centuries old, but its roots fed in a deep-layered soil of spiritual and political traditions that had flourished in the Mediterranean world since ancient times. Freemasonry rejected standard tenets of Christianity, yet retained a strong consciousness of a Supreme Being, as well as an urgent sense of political and civic duty traceable to the pre-Christian republics. In Europe, where universal suffrage was still not accepted, Masonry had aristocratic connections, yet opposed centralized control as traditionally leveraged by monarchy – hence its emphasis on the word “free”. The Catholic Church nursed a special enmity for the Freemasons, considering that they’d helped strike a mortal blow at the union of church and state. But Protestant Reformationists hated the Freemasons too, because they wanted to have their own version of the church state. So, having been the object of numerous bloody persecutions in Europe, the Masonic Order adopted the habit of operating quietly...which only fueled the suspicions against it.

Indeed, persecution was why some Masons and their families emigrated to the Americas in the early 1700s – they were looking for the same freedom as were Puritans and Quakers. Here, Masons felt safe enough to come out of the closet, so to speak. The first colonial Masonic circles began appearing around 1733. By the Revolution, close to 150 lodges were meeting, Many of their members were influential men, which is how Masonic ideals and symbols came to define so much in the new American Republic. Today’s conspiracy-lovers like to insist that practically all the Presidents and Vice Presidents till the Civil War were Freemasons. Whatever their actual number, it’s certain that a number of men in the key group of founders were active Freemasons, including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and – last not least, because he drafted the Bill of Rights -- George Mason. This meant that colonial women’s advocate Abigail Adams had her Masonic connections, as did her friend Mercy Otis Warren, whose father James Otis and husband Joseph Warren were both prominent Freemasons.

It was inevitable that Masonic symbolism show up in our civic heraldry.

Given the Masons’ reverence for all things classical, it was not surprising that they approved the Goddess of Liberty for their coins. During the revolutionary and Articles of Confederation period, when coins were still being independently minted, there

are a few silver and copper coins – like the Continental dollar and the so-called Nova Constellatio of New Jersey -- that display Masonic symbols. The one most frequently found is the all-seeing eye in the center of a sunburst. To the Masons, this symbolized divine division and enlightenment. Some of these early coins bring Masonic and Roman symbols into close association. The motto E PLURIBUS UNUM, which already appears during this period, is said by some to have Masonic origins. One of the Nova Constellatio coppers carries a Latin motto with Goddess names LIBERTAS ET JUSTITIA (Liberty and Justice).

Our coins did not digress too heavily into Masonic elements. For their inspiration and working models, designers and Congress continued to go straight to the Roman source. Western coin art had always been ultra-conservative, changing little either in its aesthetics or its techniques of manufacture for two thousand years. On the obverse, the Romans usually put a head of a ruler or ruler's wife or Goddess or God; on the reverse they put a second design statement that reflected policy. For many centuries, European monarchies had followed this template, with a king's head on the obverse and a coat of arms or heraldic animal making the policy statement on the reverse. Now our own designers stayed true to the tradition; they simply substituted heads of Liberty for the old-time heads of emperors and kings.

But our coins did go into one frenzy of European Imperial adulation over a leader. When the Revolution ended in 1783, there was a spate of coins with Washington's head or bust – often wearing that Roman laurel wreath of the victorious general. A couple of Washington-head coins have the all-seeing eye on the reverse – an appropriate choice, since Washington was definitely a Freemason. After the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787, the first coin issued by the treasury department was the Fugio copper cent in 1787, so-called from its Latin motto FUGIO, meaning “Time flies.” It showed a sundial and sun, Masonic symbols. The job was contracted out to a private mint in New Jersey. This was essentially the first and last U.S.- issue coin with Masonic matter on it (though Masonic symbols would continue to appear on our paper currency till the present day.)

When Congress started centralized minting at the Philadelphia Mint, there was a great debate about these heads on the coins. According to *A Guidebook of United States Coins*:

“Many members of the House favored a representation of the President’s head on the obverse of each coin. Others considered the idea a monarchic practice. Washington is believed to have expressed disapproval of the use of his portrait on our coins. The majority considered a figure emblematic of Liberty more appropriate and the Senate finally concurred in this opinion.” So engraver Robert Birch was hired by Congress, and came up with a buxom Liberty with thick wavy locks. She was identifiable in the Roman manner by the motto LIBERTY PARENT OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY. These were coined in 1792.

When the Great Awakening christianized the U.S. more heavily, a strong anti-Freemason reaction set in. By the 1840s, with the old Protestant grip on state affairs lessening, Catholic lay families and clergy (including Father De Smet and other Jesuits who had been chased out of Belgium by revolutionaries) began immigrating to the U.S. in large numbers. No sooner had they unpacked their trunks than they added their outcry to the Protestant clamor.

As the frontier moved west, Masonry moved with it. Perhaps Masons sought elbow room and greater anonymity in the territories that Daniel Boone did. At any rate, they continued to be a force in politics. In the territories, with organized government absent, Masons often volunteered as ad-hoc law and order. Indeed, I’ve always wondered if the lawman’s “tin star” was a Masonic inspiration, since stars are a big Masonic symbol (which is probably how they got onto the first U.S. flag, with its circle of 13 stars). In territorial California, as well as territorial times in my home state of Montana, the Vigilantes who hung outlaws during the violent gold-rush times, had Masonic connections. My own great-grandfather, a German immigrant who was a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason, was evidently tapped by Masons among the Montana Vigilantes and asked to serve as a guide into mountain areas where outlaws had their hideouts. My Mason great-grandfather went on to serve in the state legislature and help write the state constitution in 1889, as did Masons in other states across the West. In many American towns and cities, the Masonic Temple was one of the first buildings to go up on Main Street.

By the time I was born, much of the old controversy had temporarily hushed. In my hometown, in those comfortably conservative times, Masons were now regarded as

pillars of the community. Many women and men I knew who were Protestant churchgoers also belonged to the local Masonic lodge, or its female branch, the Order of the Eastern Star. It was the in thing in an American town in my girlhood for young Protestants to join the Order of DeMolay for Boys, or the Order of the Rainbow for Girls.

But during the 1960s and 1970s, as the United States was jarred by a new outbreak of liberalism and civil-rights changes, all the old paranoias revived—especially after the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision that struck down school prayer. Ultraconservative Protestant Americans blamed the country’s decision to separate church and state entirely on our Freemason founders, and viewed the Bill of Rights as a satanic Masonic plot. Since it was now a hard thing to throw brickbats at the founders, many right-wing Christian historians convolutedly tried to prove that George Washington was not a Mason. Catholics got in their licks too. Today, writing in *Catholic Restoration*, Father Donald Sanborn says: "The cult of liberty in the eighteenth century is intimately associated with Freemasonry. The political and social goal of Freemasonry was and still is to "free" man from the "tyranny" of the Catholic Church and from any civil authority which does not claim to be democratic. By definition, a church or a regime is tyrannical for the Freemason if it seeks to make dogmas or to rule without the consent of the governed."

Today, any Internet search can turn up dozens of anti-Mason hate sites. Predictably, during President George W. Bush’s inauguration, there was a little anti-Masonic flurry that never made it onto the 5 o’clock news. As Charisma News Service tells it:

[headline]

'PRAYERS KEPT MASONIC BIBLE FROM INAUGURATION'

"The *New York Daily News* called it ‘an act of God,’ and intercession leaders agree. They maintain it was an answer to prayer that prevented President Bush from laying his hand on a controversial historic Bible when he was sworn into office. Bad weather prompted the use of a Bush family Bible at the inauguration, rather than a 1767 King James edition used by George Washington and several other presidents. Representatives of the New York Masonic Lodge that owns the Bible decided it was too

fragile to be exposed to the cold and drizzle, said the *News*. Several ministries had issued prayer alerts about the traditional use of the Masonic Bible, which they warned could have spiritual consequences because of its use in the movement's secret rituals.”

Charisma News Service solemnly assured its readership that “men who have taken Masonic oaths on Masonic Bibles have ‘usually without realizing it entered into...pacts with false deities.’”

However, as I look back at that bristling phalanx of theocratic Protestant state constitutions that still existed in 1785, I think that a handful of Masons could not have moved that church mountain all by themselves. Today it’s hard to know exactly what went on in the smoke-filled rooms of the 1780s, but it must have taken some quiet coalitioning of powerful Masons with powerful deists and Christian liberals in order to implement all the changes that led to adoption of the Bill of Rights. To get these drastic amendments ratified by the states, a majority vote was required in a majority of the states – no easy task if Masons were so mistrusted then as they came to be later. Yet the amendments *were* approved. And clearly the Masons among our founders had a bigger vision than merely making the U.S. comfortable for their order. After all, it was a Freemason named Benjamin Franklin who brought Native American government ideas to the table. A Freemason named George Washington turned down the trappings of monarchy and undue political power after his generalship had won the Revolution for all of us.

For better or worse, powerful and complex new ideas had entered our country from many directions, and on a broad front, all of them overrunning the Old Protestantism that had founded most of the colonies, all of them raising that ancient question of who “the people” are, and how fully they would participate in government. Our founders made an enormous effort to synthesize these ideas, and weld them into a workable reality. The symbolic evidence of our coins shows that synthesis.

CHANGES IN THE WIND

Back to my mother's original question: how did our Protestant founders allow all those pagan images to get on the coins? Wouldn't they have fought tooth and nail to keep such images out of sight?

From the evidence, it appears that the Bible-believing Protestant patriots may not have been as prepared as were the Age of Enlightenment patriots, when the moment of truth came in 1776 and it was suddenly time for their American colonies to organize into some sort of independent entity that would last. Inevitably, revolt against British monarchy left American Protestants in a political Catch 22 -- the monarchy and the divine right of kings which they'd just rejected was based on the religion they believed so ardently. The English tradition they'd just rejected -- which meant government by common law, without a written constitution -- also would not serve these newly liberated and chaotic colonies adequately.

Most of the state legislatures did try to protect church interests, and get around the Catch 22, by writing their own constitutions, which included church-state clauses favoring Protestantism and requiring religious loyalty oaths for officeholders. But these state constitutions simply perpetuated the old hatreds between religions. After the Articles of Confederation were signed, it was clear that old religion wouldn't be good glue for a new nation.

In the absence of workable ideas from Old Protestants, it was the handful of Age of Enlightenment statesmen who swiftly moved into leadership positions at the Continental Congress. They were the ones with the statecraft and boilerplate that provided our country's first operating infrastructure. They were there with the idea of native-inspired Confederacy to lace 13 states into one nation. They were there with the idea of a written Constitution to better unite a confederation, inspired both by native democracy and Roman law. They were there with the old Roman idea of a Republic, proposing it as the time-tested alternative to monarchy. Finally, when the U.S. Constitution was found lacking in protection for human rights, it was these same leaders who fought to provide those protections through the Bill of Rights. The moderate swing vote in our Congress evidently went along with the Age of Enlightenment proposal. Outvoted for the moment, and with no better governmental alternative on the horizon, the

old Calvinist element decided grudgingly to support the creation of a Republic, perhaps in hopes they could someday Christianize it.

Inevitably, then, it was the Age of Enlightenment leadership, and their supporters, who put the non-Christian symbols on our coins, with all their heavy freight of Roman, native American and Freemason history.

It took almost a century – from 1776 till 1862 -- for the Old Protestants to recover that ground they lost during the Revolutionary era. But by the Civil War they had made big inroads in the grassroots everywhere, and were poised to ride that religious groundswell that liberal Christian abolitionists had created around slavery. Their goal was to reshape what they viewed as a “godless” American Republic into a Christianized Protestant American Empire. In 1864, the thunderclap appearance of IN GOD WE TRUST on the coins signaled the re-emergence of a politically powerful conservative Christianity, and a Christian cultural repositioning that warred on the old Enlightenment. Yet other groups in the United States continued to struggle, like a butterfly dragging itself out of its chrysalis, towards a more liberal and democratic expression of that Republican government. Once again the *populus* were speaking out, angry, confronting the aristocrats. They wanted voting suffrage for former slaves, women, Native Americans on reservations, naturalized citizens, 18-year-olds, people who didn't own property. They wanted an end to child labor, decent working conditions, fair treatment for immigrants and a host of other things.

As cities and communities reverberated with these issues, their local parades and pageants often incorporated the figure of Goddess Liberty. Typical was the stirring scene on May 1874, described in flowery period prose in the *Oberlin Weekly New* as the town celebrated the ratification of the 15th Amendment:

“A more beautiful day never dawned upon a public occasion than Thursday, the anniversary of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. The event is on which both the white and colored American may well unite in efforts to make it memorable. The motives which inspire these anniversary occasions, are born in a noble impulse of loyal devotion to a common country, and are worthy to be cherished and encouraged.

“The celebration of Thursday was prepared in the face of many difficulties, and the grand success which crowned the occasion was cheering in every sense. It was here

that the colored man found refuge and friends during that long night of his bonding; it was here that the page of instruction was opened to him, and it was peculiarly fitting that a national event for which Oberlin had done so much to prepare the way, should be commemorated in their midst.

“At six o'clock, A. M., the festivities were begun by the firing of cannon on the College campus.

“From a very early hour in the morning people began to come in from the country and the adjoining towns; our own people were all out, and soon the streets were filed with a multitude of all colors and nationalities, all dressed in their gayest summer costume and bent upon celebrating with proper display, this grand national anniversary.

“At a little after ten o'clock the celebrated colored Band from Delaware, which had arrived on the evening previous, took up its position on North Professor street at the point where the right of the procession was to rest. After less delay than frequently occurs upon such occasions, the procession was formed and ready to move. The chief marshal, Andrew Jackson, Esq., rode in advance, and was followed by one of his aids (sic.). Then came the band, playing cheerful and inspiring airs. Next to the band was a company of fifty or more, on foot, with a United States flag; then a barouche, containing the mayor and common council of the city; a large band-wagon, in which were thirty-seven young ladies, representing the thirty-seven States of the re-constructed Union, and another representing the Goddess of Liberty--all dressed in white.

“This was followed by another band-wagon, filled with ladies and children; this, by an elegant barouche, containing the President and the speaker of the day, and this, by twenty -eight other carriages. Banners, with appropriate mottoes, were displayed at different points in the procession. Some of them were, "We prefer the deeds of our friends to the promises of our enemies;" "We don't vote for traitors nor their friends;" "We want civil rights;" "Oberlin foremost in the battle for freedom;" "Sumner's last words--"Take care of my Civil Right's bill." A portrait of General Grant had over it "The nation's choice," and one of Lincoln, which was placed on a black back-ground, had around it, "Dead but not forgotten." Altogether it was one of the finest and most imposing processions that ever passed through our streets.”

For the next 75 years, the young lady Liberties in these parades would become stock figures in 4th of July celebrations the nation over. In a curiously convoluted way, they were also the ancestress of today's Miss America contests, though none of those straight-laced girls could have imagined beauty contestants parading in bathing suits.

I find it interesting that Christian ikons never replaced Liberty on the coins. There were no figures of Jesus, no apostles, angels or crosses -- none of the stock-in-trade church symbols. Perhaps deep-dyed Protestant disapproval of "graven images", so linked by the Reformation mind to both Catholicism and paganism, made American church people shrug off the idea of stamping their most cherished symbols on money.

Yet clearly church people felt that a pagan on our legal tender was inappropriate. By the time Liberty's bronze colossus was inaugurated with New York festivities in 1887, her engraved image was already disappearing from our coins, or undergoing a curious kind of de-dignifying. On his 1880 gold dollar, George T. Morgan did a Liberty who looked like an ordinary American housewife, with her hair in a bun. In 1892, Charles Barber's half-dollar Liberty looked strangely masculine, with short hair. In 1917, there was a public scandal over Hermon A. MacNeil's new quarter with its Standing Liberty holding a shield and olive branch. Her toga exposed one breast. Newspapers filled with angry editorials about this "obscenity." Congress hastily ordered a modified version, and the offending mammary gland was covered up.

Meanwhile, in 1893, coins with Liberty's image on them probably went into a foundry melt, comprising 22,000 donations of coins, gold, silver, jewelry, swords, etc. to make what was billed as "the New Liberty Bell." It was created for the Parliament of Religions at the 1893 World Exposition. The new Bell had a quote from the Bible on it. This was a plank in American Christianity's emerging new historical repositioning, that U.S. law and government was really based on the Bible and Judaic law. A typical schoolbook of this period was Henry Carrington's *Beacon Lights of Patriotism*, whose premise was that the first Constitution in world history was the Ten Commandments. The book mentioned Romans in passing, but nothing about Roman law. It sanitized the colonies' image, glossed over their drastic efforts to limit civil rights, laundered gnarly slave-owning Masons like George Washington to look like apostles.

Meanwhile the tug-of-war over coin mottoes continued. In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt objected to IN GOD WE TRUST and took it off, on grounds that the First Amendment prohibited use of God's name on our coins. But Congress overrode him, and put IN GOD WE TRUST back. Nevertheless, a few designers had their own way with coin ideology. In 1916, Adolf Weinman put the word LIBERTY back on his new silver dime, along with a Goddess wearing a distinctive winged helmet. It's no accident that women's suffrage was being hotly debated at this time.

Between 1900 and World War II, like a magnificent sunset that ends a day, the most beautiful of our coin Liberties appeared – the last of their kind. American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, whose work showed so much sensitivity about women, designed what many collectors consider to be the most magnificent of American coins – the Walking Liberty in dramatic high relief, emerging from sun rays (shades of the Masonic sun), on the \$20 gold piece in 1907. He also did the last of the war-bonneted Liberties on his 1907-33 gold eagle, and colluded with President Roosevelt on ensuring that the motto LIBERTY was restored, replacing IN GOD WE TRUST. Adolf Weinman did his own dynamic “Walking Liberty” on the 1916-1947 half dollar. Anthony De Francisci's silver “peace dollar” of 1921-35 featured a young Liberty crowned with rays of light, whose poignant, melancholy expression and parted lips suggested that She was saying something about the World War in Europe.

These Liberties were reviled as feminist propaganda by church people opposing women's suffrage. Nevertheless the 19th Amendment was finally adopted in 1920, and my great-grandmother and grandmother finally got to vote.

Nevertheless Liberty's day in the American sun was drawing to a close. H.L. Mencken wrote: “It would surprise no independent observer if the motto, In God we trust, were one day expunged from the coins of the republic by the Junkers at Washington, and the far more appropriate word, Verboten, substituted. Nor would it astound any save the most romantic if, at the same time, the goddess of liberty were taken off the silver dollars to make room for a bas relief of a policeman in a spiked helmet.”

MODERN TIMES

It was World War II, and the crusade against “godless fascism,” that struck the final blow at any lingering consciousness about our classical, Native American and Freemason roots.

Church repositioning had made many American citizens and historians unable to see that European fascist movements were nothing more than extremist versions of that Christian Imperial fundamentalism which had already been running Europe for many long centuries. Italian, Spanish and German fascism had enjoyed broad support from conservative Catholic and conservative Protestant establishments in their countries. While Hitler’s regime killed Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and Slavs with terrifying efficiency, they probably killed no more in all than did the Inquisition or Charlemagne’s conquering armies (which exterminated several tribes opposing Christianity). By 1950, with the cold war gearing up and the U.S. now fighting “godless communism,” and Radio Liberty beaming political messages to people behind the Iron Curtain, the Goddess who had always been the American embodiment of liberty had vanished from our legal tender for good.

On the popular level, as Liberty disappeared from 4th of July parades, a change in monetary policy was removing Liberty’s image from public awareness at a deeper level.

The U.S. government had already ended circulation of gold coins in 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt took the country off the gold standard. Federal law prohibited U.S. citizens from owning gold, even jewelry, for a time. My mother had always hidden her little collection of gold pieces, in fear and trembling that the government would show up at her front door and want to confiscate them. Now Washington started taking the .900-pure silver coins out of circulation as well. Then, in 1965, as a symptom of steady inflation, Congress debased our coinage. As my rancher father started complaining that the needle for a hay-baler had gone from \$5 to \$100, and my mother complained that coin collecting was getting more expensive, Congress was replacing the smaller silver coins with “clad coinage” -- issues that had an alloy core sandwiched between copper-nickel or silver surfaces.

My mother frowned at seeing this. “The Roman Empire got in trouble when it debased its coinage,” she said.

The changeover meant that older coins displaying Liberty began to disappear from public view. Many were melted down. Surviving examples started disappearing into collections. Our paper money emphasized male historical figures. All this meant that new generations of Americans grew up without seeing and handling those female images of Liberty that had coursed through American commerce and family life daily for almost 200 years. Coins, though expressions of high national destiny, are intimate and tactile to the people who use them every day. Given to kids as allowance, carried in pockets as lucky pieces, saved in children's piggy banks or housewives' cookie jars, hoarded during wars, buried in the back yard during times of danger, kept in desk drawers as keepsakes of past generations, coins get worn smooth by the warm fingers and sweat and cares of living people.

My generation (I was born in 1936, pre-babyboomer) was the last to finger the winged helmet on that 1916 dime as we paid for a movie. I loved the heavy clink of silver dollars in my jeans pockets, and wondered why the Liberty on the 1921 dollar looked so sad. In 1955, when I left the Montana ranch to go East to college, I tipped the porters on the train with silver dollars... and arrived in New York to find that "pilgrims" (as Montanans called Easterners) didn't use silver dollars any more.

As proof of how resistant to change a tradition can be, our coins did continue to reflect their classical pagan heritage in subtle ways, with the same measured gravity. Congress replaced Liberty heads with profile heads of Presidents in the best tradition of Roman art -- Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Kennedy. At the peak of the cold war, as part of its propaganda effort, Congress ordered up the 1971 Eisenhower dollar, with the good general looking as solemn and jowly as any Roman emperor. On the reverse, to stick it to the Russians, Congress put the Apollo moon-landing insignia with its eagle.

My mother lived to see the federal government re-legalize private gold ownership in the 1970s. Now suffering from what may have been multiple sclerosis, Nellie was relieved to know she wasn't a desperado any more. She loved getting out her coins and looking at them, though her shaky fingers now had a hard time holding them. She gave me a favorite bronze Faustina, whose lovely profile of this imperial Roman wife showed signs that many previous owners had lovingly rubbed her nose and coif. Eventually my mother's health deteriorated so much that my dad placed her in a convalescent home in

Great Falls, where she could get therapy. She left her beloved coins behind in the ranch safe, afraid that someone would steal them.

After my mother died in 1979, my father sold her coin collection to pay her accumulated medical bills. It brought over \$100,000. Mom hadn't done half bad with her pin money.

In 1986, the federal government issued its first gold coin in 50 years. It was snapped up by collectors. Today coins are just that -- an international hobby, not the movers of international commerce that they used to be. Yet the highly collectible coins compete with fine arts in terms of prices brought at auctions. On December 1, 1999, the best surviving example of the "scandalous" quarter dollar -- the one showing Liberty with one unbarred breast -- went on the block to raise money for cancer research. Greg Rohan of Heritage Numismatic Auctions, Inc., the country's largest rare coin auction house, said: "Only 52,000 of them were made, and this is the best surviving example. It is expected to sell for between \$50,000 and \$100,000." The coin was part of a complete collection of the 38 Standing Liberty quarter dollars, put together by an East Coast collector who preferred to remain anonymous. The 38 coins brought almost \$1 million total.

Today, in the commercial world, Eurodollars are the coins of the hour. Their stark futuristic designs show how hard Europeans are trying to break with the bad old regimes, so often symbolized on their coinage. Yet Eurodollars are just pocket change -- coins themselves are on their way out, as global plastic and electronic bank credit minimizes the role of metal currency even further, to say nothing of the value of gold and silver, which has sunk very low (\$271 an ounce for gold as I write this, down from an all-time high of nearly \$700 an ounce). Gold is now so cheap, so widely used as an industrial metal, that the U.S. government doesn't mind its citizens owning gold once again. On our last coins, feminism and a lingering humanist classicism gets a last bow with portraits of real-life females on our coins, namely Susan B. Anthony and Sacajawea. Anthony is in full Roman profile -- but Sacajawea is not. We see the whole face of a lovely and pensive young Native American woman, and that of her baby...the first baby in U.S. coin history.

The Sacajawea dollar may be the ultimate in debased coinage, but design-wise it's one of our finest coins. It's also a sign that a new consciousness about our Native American heritage may be reviving. Today the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) is still operating -- the oldest participatory democracy on Earth. A growing number of academics like Prof. Bruce Johansen of the University of Kansas dedicate themselves to studying our Native American civic heritage. Recently Professor Johansen found himself attacked in print by no less a personage than Supreme Court Justice Robert Bork for what he'd done to destroy the myth that American democracy was created by white Christians of European descent.

“Heady stuff for a professor from Kansas,” was Johansen’s surprised comment.

Liberty herself is found only on commemorative issues today.

Unlike Liberty, the Eagle stayed popular. The bird appears not only on coins, but flag standards, military emblems, civic architecture – even as the “official bird” of the U.S. Post Office. Two World Wars in which the Eagle led our troops, and centuries-long Christianization of the Eagle, kept it untouched by lobbying and controversy. One would never know that this was also the Thunderbird who guarded the Great Tree of Peace. In 2001, the screaming eagle’s ubiquity as a much-loved American folk symbol ranges from Harley-Davidson biker jackets to the environmental movement, where fights to save the endangered bald eagle have given new life to our “American heritage.”

The Eagle’s murky past as a pagan symbol, and as a symbol of tyrannical European monarchy, is conveniently not mentioned.

Outside the realm of civic heraldry, the Liberty symbol keeps but a thread-like hold on our national conscience. Today even many liberals are lacking in a sense of Liberty’s relevance to national and world issues. In the Millennial education program, lesson plans position the Statue of Liberty as a relic of the past, a symbol of 19th-century aspirations of European immigrants, rather than a symbol for the 21st century non-European immigrants piling into the U.S. today, as “tired and poor and yearning to breathe free” as they ever were. Some take a politically correct view that Liberty represents the aspirations of white people only, that she has nothing to say to blacks, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Islanders. Today, few liberal Americans refer to the Statue of

Liberty as a Goddess, showing that most of them aren't even aware of Her classical roots. She is commonly called "Ms. Liberty" or "Lady Liberty," or just "The Statue."

Barry Moreno, National Park Service librarian at the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, has made it his business to study his charge intensely, recalling the churches' fuss when the Statue was put up and a recurring debate over whether Liberty was originally supposed to represent a black woman. His loving researches consumed five years, culminating in publication of *The Statue of Liberty Encyclopedia* (Simon & Schuster). Moreno doesn't deny that the original inspiration for Liberty was the Roman goddess Libertas.

But the religious right, having blasted Juno Moneta off our coins, now train their cannons on the Statue of Liberty. One group started a drive (which failed so far) to replace Liberty's torch with a cross. On the Web, the Society for the Practical Establishment and Perpetuation of the Ten Commandments state: "What the heathen Statue of Liberty really means [is] Freedom to seek asylum in America from the rightful stigmatization of true criminality in other nations...Freedom to practice homosexuality or lesbianism ...Freedom to murder innocent human embryos and fetuses...Freedom to publicly blaspheme God." Another website rants: "You probably didn't realize it but America is steeped in Idols! The Statue of Liberty is actually a replica of the Babylonian goddess 'Ishtar', the Mother of Harlots."

Conspiracy-loving Protestant and Catholic groups insist that Liberty's installation in New York Harbor was a Freemason (or Satanist, or Illuminati, or atheistic) plot to subvert Christianity. They interpret the Statue's restoration for the 1976 Bicentennial as a "fulfillment" of a dire prophecy in *Revelations* about restoring an image of the anti-Christ.

So intensely do these people hate Liberty that it's clear they would destroy her images if they dared. Americans who were shocked at the Taliban's recent destruction of ancient Buddha statues in Afghanistan need to realize that the Christian version of this Islamic iconoclasm is alive and well in the U.S., and would happily blow the Statue of Liberty to pieces if it had the chance. The iconoclasts would haul every Liberty down off the dome of any state capitol where one still stands, and bulldoze all her Civil War monuments – even melt down historic coins with Her image.

Right-wing Americans have been repositioning our history for so long now that most Americans trustingly believe in the reinventions. For example, the average person believes that George Washington was a devout Christian. Religious-right leaders pore through Washington's speeches and highlight his rare use of the word "God," ignoring the fact that General Washington meant something different by this word than does Pat Robertson or Bob Enyart. Honest Christian scholars do admit the truth about Washington. In his *Six Historic Americans*, John E. Remsburg, a Christian scholar, investigated this question exhaustively, looking at sources contemporary to the great general who went home to his plow in Virginia. Remsburg quotes the Rev. Richard M. Abercrombie, a close friend of Washington's family, as saying emphatically, "Sir, Washington was a deist."

Many Europeans have also accepted these American repositionings as well. In *The Journal of Scholarship for a Humane Economy*, John Bolt, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, makes a typical statement as he writes of the illustrious churchman, Abraham Kuyper, leader in the National Dutch Reformed Church, who visited the U.S. in 1898 and spoke to enthusiastic crowds about how he saw America's Christian mission. Says Bolt: "Kuyper, of course, was not the first to make such claims about the linkage of religion and liberty in America. [America's] liberty was not grounded in atheistic rebellion against God but in an appropriate, Calvinist-inspired rejection of tyranny. Liberty was a political good, hard-won by Dutch Calvinists in their struggle against Spain as well as by Americans from Great Britain. This liberty and the political experiment that ordered it was a beacon for the future of world history."

Bolt's statement is one of those that my mother's question throws into sharper relief today than when she first asked it in the 1960s. If the idea of Liberty was inspired by Calvinist religion, then how did Liberty wind up portrayed as a pagan goddess on our coins?

As one woman author wrote recently:

"The answer may come with an acceptance of lady liberty's many layers, an awareness of her history and a recognition of her ironies. She has been used politically as a way to avoid the slavery issue, physically as a hangman's pole, aesthetically as an emblem of men's desire and metaphorically as an anti-immigration wake-up call. She is

our mother, our comfort, our pride. She has been exalted and admired, parodied and ignored. All of these meanings--and many more--encompass her. And we, as Americans with our shared history of shame and pride, now gather these meanings collectively and compress them all into the ever-present icons of our lady liberty.”

Black poet Robert Hayden put it more briefly and bluntly:

blonde miss teen age
america waving from a red white and blue flower
float as the goddess of liberty a divided
people seeking reassurance from a past few under
stand and many scorn

Clearly the Goddess and the Eagle show us things about our history that have been deliberately obscured.

One doesn't even have to look for "Freemason conspiracies" to find those ancient substrates of non-Christian social dynamics still existing in the United States. The long-enduring Roman layers are there like basement rock in Earth's geology. They are there even in the Old Christian dynamics that moved Cromwellian and Tudor England, and the Holy Roman Empire, and the Empire of Charlemagne, and the early Church. To a degree, we are still citizens of Rome. To the degree that we strained away from the Roman model and came close to democracy, we have responded powerfully to non-Roman influences – especially, I think, the dynamics of native American government. They too are there in our social bedrock, as surely as native American blood is flowing in our veins. According to Native American historian Jack Forbes, because of widespread intermarriage, perhaps 20 percent of all native-born Americans have significant traces of Native American ancestry. This includes many people who identify as African American.

In spite of universal suffrage, in spite of all the democratic change we've gone through in 200 years, we can find the old Roman habits everywhere – whether in our recent controversial election of President Bush through the electoral college, which our founders based on that similar institution in the Roman Republic, or in our devotion to

capital punishment (though we've traded the ax for the electric chair). We can touch Roman life through the growing power of our wealthy corporate elite, and a widening gap between the astonishingly rich and the appallingly poor. We find it in efforts to roll back women's and children's rights, in hopes of restoring that old male privilege that was the bedrock of both American colonial and Roman society. We can find it in the 21st - century American reinvention of slavery – sweatshops, immigrants and teens working for less than minimum wage, a growing prison-labor system – and must remind ourselves that the aristocrats who founded our country accepted the fact of slavery as the Romans did. Even the religious right have their Roman tinge as they clamor that we abandon democracy and return to being a “real Republic” -- that we junk the First Amendment and favor Christianity over other religions. And we can find the old Native American models operating in our national life as well – in California, for instance, where the recall of Governor Gray Davis has thrown the governorship open to a wild people's choice. It was the ancient native councils of the Northeast who invented the recall, with their concept that elected officials were truly accountable by the people and removed from office in an orderly manner if they displeased the people.

American history has taken the Goddess and the Eagle on a long journey, retooling them and re-expressing them, as civilizations have done with symbols for thousands of years. As my mother's daughter, I have hopes for Liberty, as a symbol that can be melted down like a coin and re-struck for a new millennium. Proof of her potential for new power, her ability to be alloyed into any culture, anywhere in the world, can be seen in her loving adoption by Spanish Basque nationalists during Spain's First Republic, as they put up a monumental statue of their own *Diosa de Libertad* in Bilbao. (It was later destroyed by Franco's troops). Her allure for struggling peoples everywhere can also be seen in Asia, in the more recent Liberty put up in Tianamen Square by Chinese dissident students (it too was destroyed by the People's Republic of China's government, but the dissidence and demands for democratization remain).

Over the last 5000 years of time, one thing has not changed – that, for a civilization to have any lasting worth, a high value must be put on the individual human life. Women are well equipped to determine that value, since they can carry life in their bodies for nine months. As globalization swallows the globe, and money and free trade

become the major driving force of so much global politics, it behooves us to remember that money is best used to nurture basic human needs, not to exploit these needs. Come to think of it, perhaps that's why the old Senators of the Roman Republic decided to put the mint next to Juno's temple – to remind themselves of the value of human life.

So it's important to look closely and honestly at our two chief national emblems. They tell a fascinating story that is often saddening yet also enlightening – a story of statesmen and stateswomen who were less than perfect, but who brought together a potent mix of ideas that drove the future democratization of our Republic in undreamed-of ways. In this nation that is said to be founded on “inalienable rights,” there is one inalienable fact of our history: the Goddess of Liberty did preside over the birth of that “real Republic.” And the Eagle has always belonged to Her.

Further readings:

Founding American documents can be found online at *The Avalon Project* (www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm) and *Amdocs - Documents for the Study of American History* (www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html)

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