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Enlightenment, Light and Locke
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INTRODUCTION

As a fitting tribute to the end of the last Millennium, A&E Television broadcast “The One Hundred Most Influential People of the Past Thousand Years”. Included were Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR and Regan. Of them, Jefferson was ranked most influential; though, it wasn’t for his Presidency, but for his Declaration of Independence. But a few names above his was John Locke, an Englishman who lived from 1632 to 1704. For despite all the Jeffersonian rhetoric that so characterizes the Declaration as one of the great statements of the human condition, it was Locke who had provided the ideas.

History cannot, with certainty, tell us whether Jefferson was a Freemason, but it can tell us that Locke was not¹. Locke died before the events at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern of 1717. Yet his legacy for us as Masons and for us as Patriotic Americans is unrivaled amongst the intellectuals of philosophic history, for he brought the Enlightenment from France to Britain and revolutionized society.

This paper will explore the history that shaped Locke, the history that Locke shaped, and will give some insights into his ideas that define us as Masons and as Americans. In high school physics I learned about the resolution of forces, the classic example being that of the cannon ball fired in a straight line only to be diverted into an elliptical path by the force of gravity. History works in much the same way. Even a slight force, leveraged over time, can produce significant results. The angular divergence of

¹Actually Mackey in his History of Freemasonry says he was not. Preston says he was, or at least intended to be. But Mackey disputes the authenticity of the letter Preston cited for this notion.

one path from the other may seem inconsequential for the first steps, yet so profound in effect, that at the outset we scarcely see events take shape. “For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the man was lost.”² Possibly the most blatant example of this domino effect of minor events is expressed in the last line of Richard III; “A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse”. In this paper, it will be argued how the loss of that horse on August 22, 1485 on Bosworth field funneled history through John Locke, and through him shaped events at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern and gave rise to the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

With the death of Richard III, the Plantagenet dynasty, begun by Henry II, came to an end, and Henry Tudor, known as Henry VII came to the throne of England. He would father two sons, Arthur, and a much younger Henry. Meanwhile, Spain, which had been occupied for over 700 years by North Africans, had been waging an endless war of reclamation known as the Reconquista. On January 1, 1492, Isabel and Ferdinand took Granada, finally expelling all the Moores from Spain. They made plans for their newly united country. It was to be a jewel in the crown of Christendom. Luis De Torquemada was their Grand Inquisitor. Having just purged Spain of the Muslims, he convinced Isabel and Ferdinand that it was time to clean out that other stain, the Jews. But 1492 would not long be remembered as the year of the reunification of Spain, for their Majesties had been interviewing an Italian adventurer named Columbus. Obviously, if we are to get to the Declaration of Independence,

²Early 17th century proverb; late 15th century in French, from the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations Oxford University Press, 1999, p 600: 41

we need someone to find and colonize America. But the colonization of the New World is only an aside to our story.³

The importance of Isabel and Ferdinand for us is that they had a daughter, Catherine. In 1501 Catherine of Aragon was betrothed to Arthur Tudor, heir to the English throne, but Arthur died without an heir (possibly without even having consummated the marriage). She was then given to Arthur's younger brother, Henry. Now here is the twist. As Masons we are familiar with the reference in our ritual to the Book of Ruth. Ruth had been widowed without children and under Jewish law, was remarried to her late husband's brother. For Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth, a convert to Judaism, was rewarded by giving birth to the line that would include King David of Israel. Every anointed king of Christendom claims descent from David, whose house gave rise to Jesus. But the Catholic Church of Henry's day saw things slightly differently. In Leviticus, there is a proscription against a woman sleeping with her husband's brother, 'And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing; he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.'⁴ Consequently, for Catherine and Henry to marry, they were granted a papal dispensation.

The problem was that Henry was light on Y chromosomes (a son by Catherine died at 52 days, and his other son Edward, by his third wife, Jane Seymour, died by his 16th year). Catherine produced a daughter, Mary. When Catherine could not deliver a healthy boy, Henry, obsessed with the need for

³What set him on that path? Well, aside from the obvious gain he expected (he died a pauper), there is another theory. Simon Wiesenthal, the famed Nazi hunter has set forth the idea that Columbus wanted to find a way to the far East, as a safe haven for the expelled Jews. He further theorized that Columbus, whose Italian name was Columbo or Colon, was of Jewish stock from Genoa, which had converted to avoid the Inquisition. We know he set sail the morning the expulsion went into effect, August 1, 1492, and his second mate, interpreter and three or four other key crewman were Jewish.

⁴Leviticus, XX, 21

a male heir, used Leviticus as a crutch, and again approached the Pope (the new Pope) to annul the marriage. By this time a German Priest, named Luther, had made inroads with his Protest against what he called the excesses of the Church. When the new Pope would not annul the marriage, Henry, adopted Luther's Protestantism and simply divorced Catherine, whereupon he married Ann Boleyn, who also bore a daughter, Elizabeth, but again gave Henry no male heir.

Mary, following in her mother's footsteps was Catholic; Elizabeth, following in her fathers' was Protestant, and England would remain divided until the English Bill of Rights was passed in 1689 which declared that only a Protestant could occupy the throne. What had taken place is that the crown was being flip flopped between Catholic and Protestant. When both Mary and Elizabeth died without children, the monarchy shifted to the Stuart line and King James VI of Scotland, became King James I of England, thereby uniting both kingdoms. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was the great niece of Henry VIII. But Mary had been brought up in Catholic France. It is not for naught that Scottish Rite Masonry is of French influence. Recall that England and Scotland were enemies, going back to the reign of Edward I, of "Braveheart" fame. The English and French had been at war on and off since the time of Richard the Lionheart and poor Scotland made a good pawn in French ambition. So, Mary was betrothed to Francis, son of French King Henry. That same year, Elizabeth, became Queen of England after the death of her sister Mary, and Mary Queen of Scots, was next in line. Or was she? To the Catholics of England, Elizabeth was a bastard, as Catholic Cannon prevented Henry VIII from divorcing Catherine. They saw Mary as the rightful heir to the throne, but she did not live to occupy it. So, just before the turn of the 17th century, on the death of Elizabeth, the son of a Catholic sat on a united English throne. He was a Presbyterian, but had a strong Catholic background, and he would play

Protestant and Catholic against one another to his own ends. One other factor he had inherited; the idea of a Divine Monarchy, and with it, the idea of an absolute Monarch. He lived until 1625, when he was succeeded by his Protestant son Charles, who became King Charles I.

When John Locke, the Anglican with a Puritan upbringing, was 17 years old, Charles I, who had a Catholic wife, was beheaded and England gave way to a Lord Protector, Cromwell. What led to the beheading, aside from his Catholic leanings, was that Charles had seen fit to disband Parliament when it protested his Divine right to absolute rule, and so began a period of English history known as the Integument. The tour guides at the State House in Richmond boast that Virginia has the oldest continuing Bicameral legislature in the world, thanks to the Integument, or interruption in the English Parliament.

While England swayed between Catholic to Protestant, with the dawn of the 17th century, another factor in our historical march began to show itself. The Tudor monarchs were autocrats. They had ruled with absolute power. Parliament was so much a rubber stamp. Henry bullied Parliament into enacting a loyalty oath, which effectively made Henry head of the Anglican Church. Thomas Moore, Lord Chancellor, refused to take that oath and went to the block for his scruples. But when a Scot, the son of a dethroned Catholic, became King of England, Parliament was not so obliging. The memories of that dalliance with power at Runnymede, and the deposition of Richard II for incompetence, had been brought back to life to the Lords and Commoners of Parliament and they were not to be pushed around by a Stuart. One might say that the Tudors had been absolute monarchs because of the English people, while the Stuarts would have been absolute monarchs but for the English people. What no one seemed to realize was that in England, the Monarchy flourished so long as it did not push the people too

far. James II would be the last to forget that lesson. So with the new century came a new tug of war, political in character rather than religious, but never far removed from the religious at that. By 1649 Parliament would declare itself so powerful as to condemn an English King for treason. It is into this cauldron of politics and religion that Locke would formulate his ideas. A new wind was beginning to blow in England. It was called Enlightenment, and Locke would be its torch-bearer.

ARGUMENT

By the mid 1600's the modern world had begun. Superstition was being replaced by scientific discoveries. All the institutions from Church to State were being redefined. Spinoza, born the same year as Locke, had been excommunicated for redefining God. Newton was born the year Galileo died and would run with his baton. Human reason became the guiding force. While no one living in 16th century Europe would have recognized the term Humanism, the premise behind the movement was that human reason could be used to combat ignorance, superstition, and tyranny and to build a better world.

In 1513 Nicolo Machiavelli published The Prince, thus ushering in a new era of political philosophy. By then, Henry VIII had been on the throne four years. The older theory of political philosophy could be traced back to St. Augustine in the 4th century. He wrote "The City of God" in which he declared that Kings held temporal power subject to the authority of the Pope. But by 1513, Florence, Machiavelli's home town, was a Republic, without a king, and in England, Catherine was beginning to miscarry. Four years after publication of The Prince, Luther would nail his protest to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. Throughout the 16th century political philosophy would remain quiet in England. It was too dangerous to voice dissent to the Tudors, as Thomas Moore had proven. But when James I came to the throne in 1603, upon the death of Elizabeth, two new voices were heard

against the bubbling dissent that would plague the House of Stuart until James II would run for cover in 1688. These voices were those of Robert Filmer and Thomas Hobbes.

When James I came to England, he had to consolidate power. He adopted the age old concept of the Divine Right of Kings. But this idea had lost its foundation, as it had been a compromise struck over centuries between the Papacy and the monarchs of Europe. A document called the Donation of Constantine⁵, now known to have been a fraud, was said to have contained a death bed admission by the Emperor Constantine, in which he acknowledged that temporal power was a loan to the Monarchy from the Church, which was returned to the Church on the death of the Monarch. But without the Papacy in Anglican England, this idea of Divine Right needed a new underpinning, for the churches of the Protestant world made no claims on the rights of Kings. Filmer and Hobbes provided this underpinning, in the form of consolidated power residing in the Monarch for the good of the people. The church had changed, but the need for the king to be king persisted.

Into this mix we add science. Galileo had proven that the earth is not the center of the universe. Judeo-Christian religion was under attack. The Papacy had held to the old Ptolemaic theory and was proven wrong; proven fallible. When Hobbes established his political doctrine in Leviathan, he developed a consolidated power in kings without relying on God or religious ethic. He gave kings, and Charles II, in particular who appeared on the cover of his book, power through a social contract, where for the benefits of what the king could bestow, the people surrendered themselves to the Monarchy. Obviously, if we are going to get to the Declaration of Independence where men decide they are free to divorce themselves from the Monarch, the political philosophy of Hobbes had to give

⁵ Civilization of the Middle Ages, Norman Cantor

way. The trouble with the social contract is that Hobbes had not taken into account the rights that Parliament had carved out for itself in the four hundred plus years since the barons ganged up on King John and began the unwritten English Constitution. From 1642 to 1651 England plunged into a civil war and was left kingless. Cromwell came and went, was replaced by Charles II, the Protestant son of Charles I who unsuccessfully tried to unite Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian. He died in 1685 and was succeeded by his brother, James II the Catholic.

“Few of us entirely escape our times and places.”⁶ Locke was product of his times. By 1690, when he finally published “Two Treatises of Government”, James II the Catholic had been replaced by William of Orange, a Dutchman, and his wife Mary. Now, here is one of those uncertainties which twist and turn history; Locke was afraid James II would return and held up the publication for two years after James had abdicated, nearly committing his manuscript to the trash bin, for fear of retaliation. Had he failed to publish, our story would end here. Locke had written the work to give support to another new line of kings that were of foreign blood (William and Mary died childless, and were succeeded by Ann, who also died childless, despite seven pregnancies, thus leading to the succession of the Hanoverian dynasty of English kings).

We add another factor, The Royal Society. In 1660 Christopher Wren, the Architect who designed St. Paul’s and who is said to have become a Mason in 1691⁷ became one of the co-founders of the Royal Society. Herein lies one the great foundations of Speculative Masonry, as it was the premier organization of scientific minds, so much so, that “A lodge largely composed of Royal Society

⁶ Stephen E. Ambrose “Flawed Fathers” Smithsonian, Vol 33, No. 8, November, 2002,

⁷Grand Lodge of British Columbia & Yukon

members met in a room belonging to the Royal Society Club in London. At a time when preachers thundered against these scientists, when newspapers thundered against them, street crowds hooted at them, and neither Oxford nor Cambridge would admit science courses, masonic lodges invited Royal Society members in for lectures, many of which were accompanied by scientific demonstrations.’⁸

In Isaac Newton The Principia , A New Translation by Bernard Cohen & Anne Whitman⁹, the strong association between Locke and Newton is revealed. Newton had stated in his second edition of Principia¹⁰, “Those who are not mathematically learned can read the Propositions also, and can consult mathematicians concerning the truth of the Demonstrations.” Cohen & Whitman argue that Newton was specifically referring to his friend, Locke. In addition there is another association connecting, Locke, the Royal Society and Newton. Newton was President of the Royal Society from 1703 until 1727, and as such at the time of the Masonic Renewal in 1717. One of Newton’s closest friends, his protege, and also a friend of Locke, was the Reverend John Theophilus Desaguliers, who became the third Grand Master in 1719, and as Secretary is credited as being the father of modern Freemasonry.

The events of 1717 are described as a “revival”. That being the case, it is axiomatic that masonry was in a sorry state by the time four lodges met in the Goose & Gridiron. In fact Elias Ashmole is credited as having been the first non operative to become a Mason, going back to 1646. If Masonry were to replace its operative format it needed a new purpose, a philosophy through which to pursue its interests.

⁸Ibid.

⁹University of California Press, 1999

¹⁰1713

Looking back at the times during which the restructuring of Masonry took place, could it be doubted that the very idea of Enlightenment became the cornerstone of the new Grand Lodge System. What speaks more to equality than the level? What speaks more to humanism than our Principal Tenants? What speaks more to the enlightenment than our concept of light?

I am suggesting that the founders of Modern Freemasonry, including Desaguliers and Anderson saw in the scientific progress of the Royal Society, in the newly finished St. Paul's Cathedral, in the leaderless Kingship of George I, in the colonial expansion of not just England but Britain, a Freemasonry, which would incorporate the highest ideals of what was emerging as the most powerful, the most civilized nation in the world. I suggest that it was at this moment in history that Freemasonry decided to become a nursery of world leadership, as it has remained to this day and adopted the Enlightenment as its moral centerpiece, a centerpiece firmly rooted in a universe created by the living God.

Were Locke's theories alone part and parcel of this revision? Hardly. Were they a significant piece of this revision? Certainly, but Locke did not live to 1717.

By the time Locke wrote "Two Treatises", he had already published his ideas on the nature of knowledge; had developed philosophic empiricism following the scientific empiricism of his friend Newton, and had written on religious Toleration. His basic premise was to develop a theory of human rights as existing by nature, just as Newton was developing a theory of the natural law of the universe. Although the biggest debate today amongst psychologists, sociologists and geneticists is whether human nature is inherited or acquired through experience, Locke was convinced that characteristics are not innate, that is, not inherited, but developed over the experiences of our lives. Accordingly, for

Locke, there could be no basis to the idea that aristocracy passed on its superiority from generation to generation. Through a natural system, a system firmly imbued with Biblical supports, Locke had constructed the foundation of equality.

Locke, unlike Hobbes, placed his entire theory of government into the hands of God. The first of the Two Treatises is a refutation of Filmer's Divine Right of Kings, in which Locke uses the story of Adam to dispel man's subjugation to a Monarch. Then in the second Treatise, he constructs his system of government, which while in certain respects, Utopian, nevertheless seeds the foundations of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Locke gives us an economic system known as the Labor Theory of Value, in which all goods are based on the labor it takes to produce them. As a senior at Rutgers, I wrote a Henry Rutgers thesis titled "Matrices, Profits and Shadow Prices, Three Studies in Soviet Economic Reform"¹¹. The Shadow Prices were developed by a Soviet mathematician (who became a Nobel Laureate after completion of my paper), Leonid Kantorovich, who used computer models to de-construct all products into the labor used to create them, and then assigned values, i.e. prices to the products. In the 1940's he had discovered the same theory as Locke proposed in 1680.

Locke also gave us another tidbit, that Jefferson seems to have picked up on; in one section of "Two Treatises" Locke refers to "Life, Liberty and Estates"¹². Later he refers to "Lives, Liberties and

¹¹Howard Kanowitz, 1971, Rutgers University Library

¹²Two Treatises of Government, Cambridge Press, 2002, P 162

Fortunes”¹³. Locke also came up with the idea of “no taxation without representation”¹⁴: “For if any one shall claim a Power to lay and levy taxes on the People, by his own Authority, and without such consent of the People, he thereby invades the Fundamental Law of Property, and subverts the end of Government.” We are all familiar with Life Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, but at the start of the Revolution, before the Declaration, the first slogan was “Life, property and no stamps”¹⁵. Locke had gotten there before Jefferson. In fact he had gotten there before Sam Adams. It was after all taxation without representation that led to the Revolution.

Our society, removed by more than 200 years from the Declaration, struggles to realize that for the first year of the revolution no one asked “What do we do if we win?” We see the system of a tripartate government successfully in place; able to withstand assassination, Civil War, the disgraceful departure of a sitting President, and we complacently believe that our omniscient forefathers had it in mind all along from the first shot at Lexington. The revolution had begun from a state of anger at the treatment the colonies were receiving from mother England. The first year had gone badly, and all concentration was on the fight, not on the future. It was in effect, a revolution without a philosophy. It was only after Thomas Paine gave us “Common Sense” that anyone stopped to think what comes next.

No where does Paine ever mention Locke in “Common Sense”, but Locke fills the air around it. Like Locke, Paine argues from the Bible. Like Locke, he argues that hereditary kingship is a conceit which allows a weak son of powerful monarch to dissipate all the latter’s accomplishments to the

¹³Ibid. P359

¹⁴Ibid P363

¹⁵Miracle at Philadelphia, Catherine Drinker Bowen, Little Brown & Co., 1986, p70

detriment of the people. His pamphlet reflects the ambivalence of the colonists, for much of it is argument against reconciliation. We were a divided 13 colonies. Lower Nova Scotia filled with Tories from New Jersey and New York, who fled to avoid entanglements against England. At the end of “Common Sense” Paine hit on the idea that if we were to break away from our Monarch, we should make a statement as to why we were justified in doing so, and what we intended to accomplish once we did: “Were a manifesto to be published and despatched to foreign courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceable methods we have ineffectually used for redress; declaring, at the same time, that not being able, any longer, to live happily or safely under the cruel disposition of the British court, we had been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time, assuring all such courts of our peaceable disposition towards them. And of our desire to entering into trade with them; such a memorial would produce more good effects to this Continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.”

Locke gave us separation of powers¹⁶. Paine suggests a government with similar features to Locke’s. In fairness to Madison, who primarily authored the Constitution, Locke, while envisioning men as equals, never saw the three branches of government to be equal. He wrote of the legislative arm being supreme, and the executive to execute the laws passed by the legislature. After all, he was deflating kings, so he could not reinvest power in the executive. As to the judicial, it was to give men equality before the law. Likewise, Jefferson never saw the judicial to be equal to the other branches, as his Presidency was to illustrate. A few blocks from the State House in Richmond, is the home of Brother John Marshall, third Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court and cousin to Thomas Jefferson.

¹⁶Two Treatises of Government, Cambridge Press, 2002, P113

Marshall is our greatest Supreme Court Justice, because he elevated the Judiciary to judge not only the people, but the government itself. In Marbury v Madison he declared an act of Congress unconstitutional. He put Jefferson in his place by issuing a subpoena directing the sitting President to appear in Court. As the tour guide took us through Marshall's library, she spoke of how the two men had become bitter political enemies and could agree on nothing. With that, I walked over to one of the book shelves, pulled off a copy of Locke's Two Treatises, and said to her; "They could agree on this."

We are familiar with the Ancient Charges, recited to the incoming Master. No. III, "You promise not to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against the government, but patiently to submit to the decisions of the supreme legislature". That is Locke's Supreme Legislature. IV "You agree to pay a proper respect to the civil magistrates, to work diligently, live creditably and act honorably by all men"; Locke again. Jefferson is quoted with having said that a little revolution is good once in a while. Locke is here saying that for so long as the government is responsive to the people, the rule of government is the rule of law, but when government reneges, then men are at liberty to replace it. How little he foresaw what would happen 71 years after his death.

After George III lost his American Colonies, another revolution took place in which an Italian, who would later come to live in Elizabeth, New Jersey, my home town, had played a catalytic role. He was Lorenzo da Ponte. He had collaborated with an Austrian Freemason, and together they ignited the French Revolution. For da Ponte and Brother Wolfgang A. Mozart had written The Marriage of Figaro¹⁷. No revolution happens without the idea that something better lies ahead. Figaro was the

¹⁷In fairness, the character was the creation of Beaumarchais, who ran arms to the Americans during the revolution and was himself imprisoned during the French revolt, but the notoriety of Figaro did not reach the public consciousness until daPonte and Mozart put him on the stage.

embodiment of that idea, one that Locke had forged. For Figaro wins out over his master, the Count Almaviva, who demands Droit de Seigneur, the right to take Figaro's bride on their wedding night. Figaro proves to the common man that the nobility does not have to be obeyed when it debases the liberties of the individual. Never before had such a statement been so boldly displayed. To this day the most respected newspaper in France is called "Le Figaro".

Unfortunately, the French replaced one corruption with another and another still. In their vengeance against the Church they had removed God from their formula. We were luckier to have had a higher quality of humanists, of God fearing men, many guided by the Enlightened principals of Freemasonry, to carry out the "what comes next" of our revolution.

On July 4, 1776 King George III noted in his diary that nothing much of importance had taken place that day. A horse, a horse, "My Country 'Tis Of Thee"¹⁸, for a horse.

¹⁸Formerly, "God Save the King (Queen)"