

ARE ALL MEN CREATED
EQUAL? AN ISSUE IN SEMANTICS

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first published on the Internet in PDF format at:
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In the second paragraph of the United States Declaration of Independence of 1776, we read:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

It is generally accepted that these words were generated by Thomas Jefferson. However, others put forth that the phrase "...all men are created equal" was coined by the Italian patriot and immigrant Philip Mazzei and then suggested to Thomas Jefferson. Despite whoever coined the phrase, it has become an established phrase in the American psyche. So well known, that many folks actually believe it is a Biblical quotation. It is not a quotation of any Biblical passage. The Bible does not teach that all humans are fully equal; all are sinners, yes, but *equal*, no.

Most history students know that the concept behind the phrase "all men are created equal" originated in the writings of the political philosopher John Locke (an Englishman, 1632-1704). Though Locke did not use the word "created" several of his phrases contain the same concept:

A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.

(book II, chapter I, §4, from Locke's essay: *Two Treatises on Civil Government*)

"Promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature", and, "should also be equal one amongst another"; herein Locke gives us "nature" as his equivalent for *the original created state in which all men are equal, or in which all men are born*.

It is said that nearly all of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, were familiar with Locke's writings, especially Jefferson; and indeed, both it and the Constitution show the ineluctable influences of Locke.

Another influence upon Jefferson was discovered within a volume found in his library: *Patriarcha, The Natural Power of Kinges Defended Against the Unnatural Liberty of the People, By Arguments, Theological, Rational, Historical and Legal* by Robert Filmer [reprinted in 1991, Cambridge Press]. In this volume Filmer quotes a Catholic cardinal named Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621). Jefferson read this quote in Filmer's volume:

Mankind is naturally endowed and born with freedom from all subjection, and at liberty to choose what form of government it please, and that the power which any one man hath over others was at the first by human right bestowed according to the discretion of the multitude.

Apparently, Bellarmine's language stuck in Jefferson's mind. Bellarmine, in another work, wrote:

In the commonwealth, all men are born naturally free and equal.
(from: *De Clericis*, Ch. VII.)

One wonders if Locke or even Jefferson, himself, had read this work of Bellarmine's (Jefferson read Latin and Greek)? The probability is that one of them did, as this was an influential work on political science and theology, both favored subjects for both Locke and Jefferson.

French political writers, who wrote just prior to and after the French Revolution (1789-1799), were typically steeped in Locke's work. One of these was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).

Rousseau also believed that each person entered this world on an equal basis, but with some qualifications. For example he states that there are two types of inequalities amongst the human species, one of which is that...

...one which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul...

(from: *A Discourse On the Origin of Inequality. Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 38 [Montesquieu, Rousseau], 1952. Published by, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Page 333.)

Rousseau's primary objective lies in demonstrating that men—when joining into societies, when property is distinguished, and laws are imposed—degrade from their pristine natural condition. Rousseau claims that man has a conscience which is a source for feelings and information. Whereas Locke taught that man began life with a "blank slate" and that knowledge began when he begins to experience experiences, and begins to reason.

Bertrand Russell, characterized Rousseau's impact upon the "new Protestant" thinking thusly:

The new Protestant approach [created in large part by Rousseau] dispenses with proofs for the existence of God, and allows that such information wells up from the heart unaided by reason.

(Bertrand Russell. *Wisdom of the West*. Crescent Books Inc.. 1959. page 237)

Locke did not believe in innate knowledge, surely Rousseau did, though Rousseau did not elaborate much upon his views thereof. Rousseau did recognize that men were NOT therefore created equal. Men differed *within* as to their souls and their "qualities of the mind". In light of some of Rousseau's thinking, the framers of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution, relied less upon Rousseau's political theories than those of Locke and others.

For a successful democracy to be instituted, Jefferson implied that all men MUST be seen as equal. If they were not seen as such; the powerful or wealthy would be tempted to abuse their subjects or employees, the wiser men could exploit those not as wise, aggressive men could exploit men less aggressive, there would be no premise for equal rights, no fair competition. Perhaps only the elitists would be eligible to vote, or only the most intelligent should be allowed to serve in government offices, *et cetera*. Thus for a democracy to work, the playing field should *appear* level. The very government itself, should be populated with men who are/were "equal", hopefully reflecting the will of the governed who also are/were equal.

John Locke's (and Bellarmine's) concept that all men are: "Promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature" was well adapted to the new visions which Americans (or, Jefferson!) had of government and independence.

Yet Rousseau touched a nerve with his appeal to the inequalities imposed by nature. Outwardly all men may appear equal (not considering physical deformities *et al*) but within the man, within the man's spirit and mind, lie a multitude of inequalities and differences! Accordingly, ALL MEN ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL. Which is the point of this brief essay, and the following matter shall augment this reality.

The son of a renowned creationist, one John D. Morris declares that,

...the Declaration of Independence, is a creationist document. Our founding fathers separated from England by citing the Biblical truth that all men are created equal.

(source: essay, *Are All Men Created Equal?* From the Institute for Creation Research. Posted on their site: www.icr.org)

Morris, of course cannot cite a Biblical reference, so he presents some tortious *interpretations* from the Bible to support his claim. For example, he states that since all men are descendants of Noah (which *is* stated in the Bible) they all are therefore equal. His conclusion is not connected to the Biblical passages at all, it is not in the Biblical texts, it is just his added thought.

Morris also states that since all humans are sinners, this too shows that all humans are equal! Again he makes a wild leap to an unrelated conclusion. The Bible does not state that since all humans are sinners, they are all then equal. Morris is taking a specific particular, *a singular* universal quality, and turning it into a non-specific axiom. Sinners only have sin in common, period.

Dr. Morris also claims that we humans are genetically identical, or in his words; "we are all essentially "clones" of each other". So, if Mrs. X has a gene which prepares her for Alzheimer's disease, is she a clone of Mr. Y who has no such deformed gene? And we are speaking of their genetic content at birth. Certainly this X is not a clone of Y, and indeed no two humans are perfectly clones of each other. It is possible that Morris wrote this paper before more current DNA research was known [a date of 1999 is seen within the HTML page]. But the point is, no two humans are naturally born with identical genetic compositions.

René Descartes, in the 1600s, popularized the notion of innate knowledge, but during the age of reason, most philosophers brushed aside the importance of innate knowledge (including John Locke); however, in the mid-twentieth century this all changed.

Noam Chomsky spearheaded the modern understanding that children were born with an innate knowledge, even grasp of, language! Exciting reading is the article: "A Review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*, by Noam Chomsky: in *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*; Jerry A. Fodor and Jerrold J. Katz, Prentice-Hall, 1964. pages 547-578. Chomsky is triumphant in demolishing Skinner's theories of learned behaviors. Following this revelation, or reassertion of Plato's ancient formulations, much research has ensued, principally upon the prenatal knowledge of God, of basic morals, of basic rights and wrongs and of basic substances.

But I add another "category", one which is Biblical. Prior to the birth of some humans, God had prechosen them and had predetermined their eternal destinies. These souls are known as the "chosen" or the "elect" (εκλεκτος). The Greek verb denoting this action is: εκλεγω "to pick out" or "choose from out of". Such prechosen souls are born without any early indications of such a status or "mark". It is not a physical thing, it is a spiritual or soulish alteration. Note this Biblical quote from the Apostle Paul:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as **he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having **predestinated** us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
(Ephesians 1:3-5, KJV)

Now I realize that issues of Sovereignty and "predestination" are countenanced in the above quote, and I will not get into a theological defense within the confines of this brief essay. But the literal interpretation of the above (and other related quotes) makes it clear that God prechose some individuals. They are predisposed to the truth of the Bible, and they will usually respond to the good news about Jesus Christ sometime during their lifetime. They will usually produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives as well, fruits which verify their unique statuses. (Galatians 5:22, 23; and pointedly Matthew 12:33).

Recall, that God loved Jacob but hated Esau, before they were born (Malachi 1:2, 3). Who drowned when the Israelites exited from Egypt? did not God make a distinction between "His people" and the Egyptians? Why were many of the Canaanites to be exterminated? Are only the Pharisees the children of the Devil (John 8:44)? were these Pharisees born equal to the 11 apostles?

Again, on the outside, the elect souls and beloved of God, seem just like other humans. And much of their lives may be spent in sin, yet they are different, very different. How do they relate to Jefferson's "all men are created equal"?

Well, we need to clarify Jefferson's statement. Is he only concerned with voting rights, with gender, with religious beliefs, with skin color, with age, with property or wealth, with political views?

Jefferson owned slaves (over 200, unto the day of his death) when he penned these words, to him they did not qualify as a part of "all men...", they were to him as the property of men. Yet, it is also true that Jefferson was strongly opposed to slavery, many of his slaves were involved with debts and he could not free them. Nevertheless, Jefferson's statement is not clear! Is he implying that because all men (white, property owners?) are

created equal that they are thus qualified to equal rights, to govern, to rule, to judge, to teach? Does he imply that because all men are created equal, that they therefore are justified in their ambitions (or, pursuit of happiness) however perverse; such as polygamy, abortion, sodomy, enslavement of children, *et al*?

Jesse James' pursuit of happiness was being a bank and train robber, but if men who are born equal break the law, would they lose their naturally born rights? What man would be qualified to judge or sentence such a criminal as a Jesse James? Would such a judge be equal to the criminal as each had been born or created equal? Did society, or Jesse's genetic code cause him to become what he was? The Declaration of Independence does not concern itself with these issues, the U. S. *Constitution* and its "Bill of Rights" does concern itself with some of these issues; "law and order" is to be established within a court system, and judges are to be appointed, *et cetera*. (Jefferson had nothing to do with the framing of the *Constitution*, as he was in Europe at the time).

Thomas Jefferson was a racist. In the only book he published, *Notes On Virginia*, he states:

I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.

(from: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1997, vol. 22, s.v. "Jefferson")

He also viewed Indians simply as enemies. The blatant hypocrisy of Jefferson is indeed, shocking. His statement: "it is self-evident that all men are created equal", is thus pure propaganda, and probably an untruth in Jefferson's own mind.

Jefferson may have been a member of the secret society, *Rosicrucians*, and some state that he was a Freemason. Not much data exists to support his ties with Freemasonry. However, it is said that 50 of the 56 signers of the Declaration, were Masons or Rosicrucians!

Jefferson was reported, by Dr. Joseph Guillotin, to have:

(1) attended meetings of the Lodge of Nine Muses in Paris;

(2) that he had marched in a Masonic procession with *Widow's Son Lodge No. 60* and Charlottesville Lodge No. 90 on October 6, 1817, at the cornerstone laying of Central College (now the University of Virginia)

(3) that the Grand Lodges of South Carolina and Louisiana held funeral orations and processions for him following his death on July 4, 1826

(4) that a Blue Lodge at Surry Court House, Virginia, was named Jefferson Lodge No. 65 in 1801.

(each noted in: Denslow, William R., *10,000 Famous Freemasons*, Volume II, Transactions of the Missouri Lodge of Research, Ovid Bell Press, Inc., Fulton, Missouri, 1960).

Jefferson may have been a member of the Charlottesville Lodge No. 90, Charlottesville, Va., as his name appears on the Minutes of this Lodge on September 20, 1817. Jefferson was also a member of the Lodge of the Nine Muses in Paris and the

Beenan Order (*Order of the Bees*) known outside Bavaria as the *Illuminati*.

In a letter to Bishop James Madison in 1800, Jefferson shared his thoughts on Adam Weishaupt and his controversial *Illuminati* group. The letter seems to be to a defense of both Masonry and Weishaupt's *Illuminati*, against the conspiracy charges laid by the writers Barruel and Robison. Jefferson's allegiances clearly lie with the Utopian and Masonic ideals rather than with the Church or a true democracy. His utopian dreams permeate his writings and can be seen hinted at in the Declaration of Independence.

Regardless, of whether or not it can be proved absolutely, that Jefferson was a Freemason, his writings and philosophy certainly support the agendas of Masonry. He was opposed to rule by a monarch, and believed that the best government was one containing the elites of the society. And he was racist.

As concerns the Bible: Jefferson seemed not to accept the Bible in his day. His own creation (the *Jefferson Bible*) was 46 pages of extracts from the four gospels. He extracted these sayings of Jesus and created his own version. He believed that the other portions of the Gospel accounts were fabrications (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1997, vol 22. s.v. "Jefferson", page 326).

In the Declaration, of course, Jefferson and the signers also present their charges against the King of England. Since "all men are created equal" stands near the beginning of the document, we can see that this is used as one of the underlying reasons to revolt against the King of England. It is a catchy phrase, ("all men are...") but loaded with semantic ambiguities. In the Declaration, it lay largely undefined, except as a source or reason for not submitting to a Monarchy, "give me liberty or give me death". And indeed, white men in America did sever themselves

from the fetters of England, yet it would be some time before women, slaves and children could also acquire the same rights!

If "all men are created equal" means that a woman can have equal rights as a man, or that slaves were the equal of their "owners", or that native Americans possessed the unalienable equal rights of the American immigrants, then the whole phrase is an indictment against many of the signers of the Declaration.

In the Laws of Moses, slaves had respect and rights, Exodus 21, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 24:14-22. Jefferson did not actively promote equality for slaves, though he did mention it in his writings, and he did try to abolish slavery. In some ways he is at odds with the Bible's picture of slavery and slaves. In the Bible slavery is not promoted; in fact if a slave can acquire his/her freedom, Paul encourages the person to do so. But the Scriptures show great concern for the welfare of slaves.

On a more contrary note [*i.e.* contrary to Jefferson's famous phrase]; the elect (**including** the elect women and slaves) become one in Christ, (Galatians 3:28) this is patently *not* applicable to all humans. In the Bible *all* men are sinners, but all are not elect. God has made permanent distinctions between men:

(a) either one is chosen or one is not (I Cor. 1:26-31)

(b) one is saved or not (II Cor. 2:15)

(c) one is a citizen of heaven or one is not

Thus divisions are seen, most occurring before the birth of an individual. In the above three divisions: race, gender, age, education or intelligence, and nationality are not considerations.

The current stance upon various human rights issues in America today (circa 2008) is still not well defined—Christians are attacked, and sexual deviation is sanctified, school prayer is monitored, radio broadcasts are censored, parents cannot spank their children, theories of evolution and mythology are forced upon young impressionable minds in our public school systems as facts within a reconstructed history. Felons cannot ever vote and the concept of family is being distorted with government support. Conservative-minded citizens are discriminated against as well as those who adhere to old fashioned Biblical morals.

Human rights in America is in a state of turmoil, and this turmoil is aided and enforced by federal courts and judges. Thus, Jefferson's "all men are created equal" seems to have become—per government definition and probably Jefferson's original intent—a state existing for only the elite, left-wing liberals or those in power. Entropy is a fact of human history and of human governments.

When other men or women (Martin Luther King, *et al*) quote Jefferson's "...it is self-evident that all men are created equal", they too are fostering a probable continuing distortion of meaning, unless they clarify their terms. They should also be careful to recall that the phrase appears to be a simple lie in the mind of the man who put it in the Declaration of Independence. It is a matter of semantics, and Jefferson pulled a sleight-of-hand!

One thing seems clear to this writer,

ALL MEN ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL!