Title

Name

Institution

**Assignment**

It is very much clear that Benjamin Franklin was a very avid reader. It is quite apparent from his autobiography that how much he loved reading. He says in the autobiography that “Reading was the only amusement I would allow myself. I spent no time in taverns, games or frolics of any kind” (FRANKLIN Chapter 8). It was in his routine to arrange club meetings with his fellow boys, and then they used to read and discuss books together. This particular routine of Franklin encouraged Franklin to start a new library of his own where all the readers would pitch in their books and then all of them had open and continuous access to the books that were then available in the library. Luckily all the men who were accompanying him agreed to do so and then they started a small library at Mr. Grace's where they used to meet and discuss the improvement of the library by including more books and making them accessible to the public. Over time it became quite obvious to them that they are unable to achieve the number of books that they anticipated when they were starting the library. Almost after a year, they had to dissolve the library, and everyone took their books back because it became a headache for every one of them to keep a record of all the available books and also the readers. However, Franklin was not yet to give up on his dream of staring a library, and this helped him to keep up with the struggle to continue the plan, “And now I set on foot my first project of a public nature, that for a subscription library” (FRANKLIN, Chapter 8). It was around this time that their club meetings that were held not in a tavern rather in a small room of Mr. Grace set for that purpose. Franklin made a proposition since the books were mostly referred to in their essays upon the inquiries, so it was quite convenient for them to collect them in one place where they used to have meetings. So this way the public library was initiated, a proposal was drawn, it was put into form, and with the help of his great friends in Junto, they were able to obtain fifty subscribers of forty shillings to start with and also 10 shillings a year for around 50 years, the company continued with this term for a long time. Around this time, he established himself in Pennsylvania, and the supply of books continued from that point. By doing this Franklin contributed a lot in educating and broadening the horizons of his community members they became quite interested in reading, and their intellectual level also started to improve over time.

It is a well-known fact that Ben Franklin was an American legend, surprisingly in the entire history of the United States of America, he was the only man who single-handedly introduced the idea of self-made man. Although he was born in a family with very limited resources and also it is known that he did not receive his primary education even then Ben Franklin was a successful printer, scientist, musician and also he was the author of so many books. It is also noteworthy that he played a significant role in finding a new country and then he became the first diplomat of that country. By looking at the autobiography of Franklin, it will become quite clear that the key to his success and accomplishing so much within a short period was the drive to continuously and constantly improving himself and making his dreams true. In 1726, when he was only 20 years old, he set one of his proudest ambitions or goals, that was the achievement of his moral perfection. He says “I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish I can live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or any company might lead me into" (FRANKLIN, Chapter 9). To achieve that goal Franklin designed and then fully committed his personality to a self-improvement program, this program contained a total of 13 virtues. The first virtue was Temperance, where he limited his eating and drinking to a certain point. Silence, where he started to speak only when it was beneficial for others or himself he stopped indulging in extra or unnecessary discussions. The order was another one of his virtue, where he organized all his things in their proper places and also he assigned proper time for all his businesses. Sincerity where he tried his best to stay loyal and sincere to the people who were around him. He made sure to do justice to all the people regardless of their status and class. Cleanliness inhabits, body and clothes and humility where he made sure that he imitates Jesus or Socrates. To make sure that Franklin sticks himself to all the virtues he used to carry a small book with himself that used to have 13 charts. For each day of the week, the chart consisted of columns and all the 13 rows were labeled with the initials of his 13 virtues. At the end of each day, Franklin used to assess himself about the progress that he made that day. For each virtue that he violated he used to put a dot along that virtue. The purpose of doing all this was to have chart free of any such dots or label thus showing a clean and pure life that was free of any violation or vice. Each week Franklin used to focus on one virtue by putting that particular virtue at the top of the chart and then he used to put a small percept besides that to explain the meaning of it. After 13 weeks he used to go through all the 13 virtues and then he used to start the entire process all again. At the very beginning when Franklin started this process, he observed that his chart was full of such labels or dots that showed that he violated most of his virtues. But over time, he observed that the marks on his chart started to disappear.

Despite working so hard Franklin was unable of achieving his goal of moral perfection, and he had some very prominent flaws including his flirting with multiple women at a time, and also his love for beer gave him quite a hard time in achieving Temperance and Chasity which were two of his 13 virtues, but he realized that he benefited from the attempt. He says that “though I never arrived at perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell short far of it, yet I was, by the endeavor, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it” (FRANKLIN, Chapter 9). By the ‘speckled ax is the best’ phrase, he meant that is quite better for a person to be seen to be trying to try ethics in spite of the various weaknesses than for anybody to give in to bad or evil feelings. While struggling with the bad feelings a person will see both his positive and negative faces which were something that Franklin appreciated throughout his autobiography (Franklin, 1896).

Based on his life stories and narration of his life through his autobiography, it will become quite clear that Franklin was a man who used to respect and valued all the religious people. For instance, in his autobiography he narrates a story when he was in England he encountered a doctor who loathed and disrespected bible's message, the way Franklin described the doctor and loathed him shows that he had immense respect and love for his religion and ultimately he was a spiritual man. To describe the situation Franklin referred to the doctor as a wicked and unbeliever. So such comments show that Franklin had religious roots. Franklin had some letters, and he was quite clever, but more like an unbeliever, he undertook to caricatures the Christian’s holy book in doggerel verse as Cotton had got Vir Gil. By doing this Franklin put many of the facts that were narrated in the bible in an absurd light and it would have hurt many people’s religious believes but thankfully this work of Franklin never got published. He says that “I have never kept several Lents more strictly, leaving the common diet for that and that for that common abruptly without the least inconvenience” (FRANKLIN, Chapter 8). So such incidents from his autobiography provide strong evidence that he was a religious man and had great love and respect for his religion as well as religious leaders.

References

Franklin, B. (1896). *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. American Book Company.