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Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích
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Katedra anglistiky

Bakalářská práce

Benjamin Franklin as Founding Father: His Role in Starting the Independent Government of the USA

Benjamin Franklin: Zakladatel americké nezávislosti

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České Budějovice 2024

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Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor PhDr. Christopher Koy, M.A., Ph.D., for his professional guidance, useful advice, and literature recommendations.

Anotace

Téma bakalářské práce je „*Benjamin Franklin as Founding Father: His Role in Starting the Independent Government of USA*“. Bakalářská práce se zabývá životem Benjamina Franklina se zaměřením na jeho vliv a roli v zahájení období nezávislosti USA. Jeho činy a jednání se zapsaly do dějin USA i celého světa, jelikož se staly významnými mezníky v americké historii. V práci je popsáno dětství a život Benjamina Franklina, důležité okolnosti v jeho životě, které směřovaly ke vzniku Deklarace nezávislosti a americké ústavy a další události vycházející z politických a diplomatických textů samotného Benjamina Franklina, jež vedly k získání statusu „otce zakladatele“ Spojených států.

Abstract

Benjamin Franklin was much more than just a diplomat and politician yet Franklin's status as a "Founding Father" of the United States, both as an editor and signer of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the U.S. Constitution (1787) and as the man who succeeded in convincing the government of France to militarily aid the war effort during the American War of Independence were essential acts for which he is most remembered. The author will read both the political and diplomatic texts by Franklin himself, respond critically to them, and read assessments of his achievements by historians as well as the failures of this famous Quaker from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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1 Introduction

Benjamin Franklin is one of the most important icons in the USA history. Many Czechs know him for his inventions (e.g., lightning conductor), though in the US, this historical figure was well known for his political influence during the Revolutionary War, where he, along with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, created the Declaration of Independence.

This bachelor's work reviews the intellect he communicated. He was not only an inventor and politician but also a diplomat, scientist, and writer.

2 Life of Benjamin Franklin

2.1 Childhood

Before Benjamin Franklin was born, the family of Franklin had lived in the village of Ecton in Northamptonshire for 300 years and owned a freehold of about 30 acres. It was a tradition that the first son would inherit the Smith business in the Franklin family. His grandfather Thomas was born in 1598, and he had four sons. Thomas, the eldest, left the house to his only child in his will, a daughter who later sold the property along with her husband, Mr Isted, John, a woollen dyer. Benjamin, uncle of Benjamin Franklin, was a silk dyer serving an apprenticeship in London. He also wrote poetry which he sent to his friends and even his nephew, who was named after him. Josiah, Benjamin's father, married young and had seven children in his first marriage and with his second wife had ten more. In total, Benjamin Franklin was born into a family of seventeen children, and he was the third youngest child. (Franklin, 2003)

He was born in Boston, New England, on 17th January 1706. His mother, Abiah Folger, was a daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first settlers in Boston. His elder's relatives were put to be apprentices in different trades however, Benjamin attended grammar school to put him to the service of the Church due to his early ability to read at a young age. His father's friends recommended raising him to be a scholar with the approval of his uncle Benjamin, who was well respected in the family. His father had little expense to finance his studies, so he sent Benjamin to Writing and Arithmetic School, where he was capable of writing but unsuccessful

in arithmetic. At ten years old he was taken home to be apprentice to his father as a silk dyer, but he failed at this skill. Benjamin had a strong inclination for the sea even though his father was against the idea. When he was twelve, he convinced his father to sign a contract where he was supposed to be an apprentice to his brother John until he was 21 years old, where he could have access to more books since his brother was working as a printer. For the first time, he recognises by the age of 16 how women are partially unequal in that era. It was there that he found it necessary to present the words the right way, how to interpret them. He learned what a positive influence words can be as a tool to persuade anyone he opposes. When his brother realised that Benjamin was going to leave him after his apprenticeship, his brother convinced every other master printing house not to employ him. His father let everyone believe that his son Benjamin was an atheist due to his questioning of religion and beliefs. He decided to leave Boston at the age of seventeen with the money he obtained by selling his books. (Franklin, 2004)

2.2 Leaving Boston

Leaving his family behind was an easy decision for him. His brother and his father only wanted to use him for their own profit. Brother took care of his unemployment by convincing every other printing house, and his father, a well-respected man in Boston, let everyone believe that their son was an infidel. He decided to ship to New York, hoping for a new start as a printer. Suddenly, he was in a position of knowing nobody and being far from home. Franklin reached out for the first Printer in Pennsylvania, and even though it was not successful, the New York manager Bradford gave him his recommendation to work under his son. Without hesitation, he made the journey to Philadelphia, although his journey had some obstacles to overcome (etc., storm, fever, homesickness), but nothing he could not overcome.

After his arrival, it was there that he saw his future wife for the first time. She was standing at the house door along with his father, Mr Read. Although they exchanged looks, Franklin was fatigued and smelly from his long journey, and he was glad that he had something to eat, so he passed through without introducing himself. As he recovered his strength, he visited the printing house, where he found Mr. Bradford with his son. They shared breakfast but were unable to give him a stable job. Bradford's son recommended a new printing house called Keimer. Franklin was partly working between two printers, and he was living under the

roof of Mr Bradford. Franklin found both rather amateur. Keimer did not like Franklin's living at Bradford's house, but he could not offer him his own, so he arranged lodging at Mr. Read's house (the father of Franklin's future wife). After this arrangement, Franklin's life started to expand. He left only one positive memory from Boston in his memory and that was his friend Collins, who helped him to get out of there. They kept in touch with each other via letters.

2.3 Early acquaintances

Word about Benjamin Franklin possessing good writing skills at such a young age had gone to the governor of the province, Sir William Keith, thanks to Robert Homes, who was close captain to the governor and brother-in-law of Franklin. Robert had heard of his little printing success in Philadelphia and immediately contacted him. It was in the governor's interest to set up the Franklin's business. Sir Keith wrote a letter to Benjamin's father, where he expressed Franklin's potential. Franklin immediately decided to travel back to Boston with this letter from the governor. Though the father declined this service help due to the probable exploitation of politically powerful men, something that Benjamin would not understand as a 21-year-old, but father started to recognise his son as a young man with great potential, and he was pleased to hear that his son was starting to make a name for himself, and even express his blessing. His father helped him on his continued journey and showed gratitude toward him by advising him on how to proceed to be a successful person.

On his journey back to Philadelphia through New York, he had a great opportunity to meet up with the governor of New York. Thanks to the number of books Franklin travelled with, he had the honour of taking notice of him, as Franklin mentions in his autobiography, *"for a poor boy like me was very pleasing"*. (Franklin 2003, P.33)

2.4 London Tea Party

Sir William Keith, the Pennsylvania governor, was relentless to set up good printing houses and decided to set Franklin's business up to his own, relying on a promise to repay him the money once he was able to. Even though Franklin had his doubts about Sir Keith's empty promises, he managed to create a business plan, which he presented to his investors. His first trip to London began in 1724. There, he gained experience in running his own business by selling books, etc. After his arrival in London, he discovered that Governor Keith had not sent

any letters of recommendation to London. Additionally, nobody knew Governor Keith, so his voyage to London was a great disappointment. Franklin was unable to raise his money for passage back to Philadelphia, and if he earned something more from his job at the printing house, he and his friend Ralph Watson (he left Philadelphia to travel with Franklin and left his wife and his child behind) spent it on amusement. However, their friendship did not last long. When his friend took leave to the countryside for some time, Franklin grew fond of his acquaintance and expressed some feelings towards her, but she politely refused. He ended up losing his friend in London. Here, Franklin shows in his autobiography that the friendship was not beneficial for Franklin as Ralph always asked him for money, advice, or help. Afterwards, he described it as: *"In the loss of his Friendship I found myself relieved from a burden. Now I began to think of getting a little money beforehand."* (Franklin 2003, P.45)

Therefore, Franklin started to save every penny he could spare. He changed his job, where he convinced his coworkers to change their appetite (including having beer during breaks) for their meals to save more money. He found in his work a companion who was from a wealthy family and well-educated, and they shared a lot of hobbies together, one of which was swimming. Franklin was able to swim from Chelsea to Blackfriars with his friend (which was around three and a half miles), along with some swimming stunts he performed from the time he was a child. This got him thinking of opening a swimming school, but his acquaintance got him a good word with a great businessman (through swimming), who offered him passage to Philadelphia with a business proposition as a merchant clerk to establish a store there. He knew that he would have less income than he was currently making but with better prospects for his future. After 18 months in London, he departed back to Philadelphia as an experienced young printer, though he was not sure about becoming a merchant clerk.

2.5 Political and Business Startup

As he returned to Philadelphia, he decided to work as a printer with his old boss Keimer. They had struggles and exchanged insults along the way, but then started their printing business as a partnership with Hugh Meredith. Due to financial problems, Keimer and Franklin had to move out of their house. They were then offered a workplace with Mr. Meredith. Franklin, together with his friends, created a club called the Junto. Its purpose was to share

views about self-improvement, such as points of morals, politics, and philosophy. Each member of the company had to bring at least one idea to the table every day they met.

One of his associates from the club, George Webb, decided to work under Franklin's printing firm, which was not successful, and yet it changed rapidly with his idea of letting Franklin write for newspapers and him with Keimer printing it. These newspapers won immediate success with the first issues. People and politics took notice. Franklin was able to pay off all his debts, dissolve the partnership into a company under Franklin's own name and this company grew exponentially.

2.6 Wife affection

Mrs. Read got married during Franklin's voyage to England, but it did not last long because she was unhappy with her husband. It took some time, but she and Franklin got back together. Franklin was ashamed of talking with her. Franklin was close to her family and spent time with them. He was patiently waiting for her to come, which resulted in his favour. In 1730, Deborah Read became Franklin's wife, though they did not get married. Deborah started to work in his bookshop, where she took all the administrative things to ease the work he had.

Franklin was not fond of religion, though the morality of it he understood well. He had written his own thirteen virtues, where he describes his ideas and way of living (see the chapter *Way of Wealth*). At the age of 24, he realized that he expresses his ideas too much, even if it means they are wrong or right. In his autobiography, he says: "*The modest way in which I proposed my opinions, procured them a readier reception and less contradiction.*" (Franklin 2003, p. 93)

This self-improvement probably had affect in his political career. In 1732, he published a book named *Poor Richard Almanack*. For people living in that era, it was both entertaining and useful to read. Franklin applies his virtues to the ordinary poor man and directs him toward honest man's work and later procuring wealth. This book earned him a great profit, it was one of the bestsellers by Franklin, and everyone owned the book in the whole colony.

2.7 Mid-life education and family

In 1733, Franklin started to study foreign Languages. He had not any problems with French, Italian and Spanish, and he learnt them in a short time. He understood Latin better by learning those three languages. His experience got him questioning the educational system. His suggestion was to learn secondary languages, except Latin, because it would be of great use to the life of a commoner.

Franklin wanted to make amends with his brother, therefore, his brother, who was slowly dying, asked for one favour of him: to take care of his son and apprentice him towards the printing business. He gladly did this service for him. Franklin sent his nephew to school for a few years before he took him into his office. Franklin's nephew died of smallpox, and Franklin faulted himself for not vaccinating him, though, at that time, vaccination was dangerous. It is the first reference about his sons in his *autobiography* in 1736.

2.8 The Junto Club and Franklin's Public Services

Since the start of the Junto Club, Franklin's career only thrived. His idea of sharing philosophy and discussing it was a great success for him. Even though Franklin was against the idea of the addition to their ranks, it was overruled. It resulted in having the club divided into small groups, which added to its great success to the public's mind. (Clerk of Assembly 2003, p. 103)

In 1737 Franklin was appointed the postmaster of Philadelphia with words from his biography: *"I accepted readily and found it of great advantage; for though the salary was small, it facilitated the correspondence that improved my newspaper, increased the number demanded, as well as advertisement to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a very considerable income."* (Franklin 2004, p. 86) Therefore he may be said to have abused his position to increase his newspaper empire and get more public attention to himself.

Franklin had a great public showing and started to attend to small matters, such as the city watch. It was getting paid 6 shillings to constables every year by merchants, housekeepers, etc., as a tax. Franklin found a necessity of unfairness for someone who did not have a business worth 50 pounds a year to a merchant who had over 1000 pounds worth in their store, yet they all had to pay the same ridiculous amount of money to the city watch. Therefore, he

created a proposition where he suggested of hiring more effectual men for the city watch as a full-time job. Tax should be proportion to one's property. That way, the rich merchant will pay more, but his merchandise will be more guarded and poor housekeepers will pay less. The second idea he had was to create a company where men were supposed to help extinguish the fire when it occurred. This public service was not available at that time, and as a result, the city has never lost more than two houses ever since. It often ended up saving half of the property. Both of Franklin's suggestions were deeply consulted, approved, and supported in the Junto Club.

2.9 Franklin's Influence in Philadelphia

Franklin's business thrived to other colonies, his plan was to stay in Philadelphia but sent his loyal workers and friends as a partner to different colonies, if they were interested. Most of the partnership were success, though he mentions in his autobiography recommends advice: *"I would therefore recommend to all who enter into Partnerships, for whatever Esteem Partners may have for and Confidence in each other at the time of the Contract, little Jealousies and Disgusts may arise, with Ideas of Inequality in the Care and Burthen of the Business, &c. which are attended often with Breach of Friendship and of the Connection, perhaps with Lawsuits and other disagreeable Consequences."* (Franklin 2003, p. 110) Franklin was afraid of not having militia nor collage in Philadelphia, and it had no proper defence with war going on among England and Spain. Afterwards he wrote a pamphlet called Plain truth to promote association of people and necessity of union a discipline, to its book success large amount of people gathered in building to discuss, people without any argue act quickly as they started with military training for possible intrusion. Franklin was chosen by companies to be their colonel, but he stepped down from the position as he saw himself as an unfit leader and recommended Mr Lawrence instead. Then he suggested to arm themselves with cannons. As Franklin reputation grew, he was anonymously elected for the Philadelphia assembly twice in a row. As he was only the spectator and advisor to council, he had notice that quakers had no problem financing war even though their believes were clearly against it. Quakers were willing to pay only if the usage of items, they invested in, were for helping to the society. Therefore, when Philadelphia required money for a new battery for the cannons, Franklin suggested to call it fire engine for the Fire company as a decoy for the company.

2.10 Academic and Public Contributions

He turned his affairs to personally establish an academy he had written along with his friend from the Junto club pamphlet called: "Proposals relating to the education of youth in Pennsylvania." This pamphlet won over everybody's attention, and got the plan in motion. They were able to build a university in 5 years and establish the University of Philadelphia thanks to Franklin's ability to write and convince people. Once Franklin decided that he had enough money for his studies and amusement, he retired from his printing business in 1748. He started to focus on his inventions, scientific experiments, and political career.

His followers grew, and so did his great public view of citizens. In 1751, Franklin was awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society for his academic contribution to the scientific knowledge of electricity. Words such as "positive," "negative," "plus," "minus," and "battery" appeared in connection with electricity for the first time along with his kite experiment. Academic ground called for the greatest scientific discovery since the Newton time.

One friend of Franklin's came to him with the idea of creating a hospital for anyone free of charge, which struck him as a good idea, and he supported it fully by creating a donation fund. Franklin convinced people by sending his newspapers to all the houses in Philadelphia, so this plan was likewise set in motion.

He had some contribution in public service (cleaning pavement streets shops etc.) but only as an idea of it which was turned down at the Philadelphia Assembly, but later received a motion along with electrical streetlamps, though he neglected his contribution to it because it belonged to someone else.

2.11 War Experience

Franklin wanted to have military defence operations in Pennsylvania, but he lacked experience and respect among the militia. He had only experienced basic military service in his twenties. He was working as an agent of the Philadelphia Assembly under the command of General Edward Braddock along with his son William Franklin, who had more knowledge of the military than Benjamin Franklin because of the French and Indian War. His job was to supply an army for general needs and write to people for their support with anything they could spare to keep them safe from hostile Indians. Franklin did persuade the people to

support and advise on the strategy of the general. However, General Braddock did not listen to Franklin due to his lack of knowledge on the battlefield. This eventually resulted in underestimating the abilities of their opponent to the great loss of soldiers. (C. Stoddard; 2010, Histori.com editors, 2023)

In 1754, North America's tensions rose as the French and Indian War loomed. The British colonies faced a common threat, but their disunity crashed their ability to defend themselves. Benjamin Franklin attended the Albany Congress that year. Recognizing the urgent need for a more unified approach, Franklin proposed a groundbreaking plan – the Albany Plan of Union.

This plan proposed a central governing body called the Grand Council. Representation in this council would not be equal. Each colony's contribution to a shared treasury would determine its number of delegates. The Grand Council would wield significant power, including regulating trade with Native American tribes, managing military affairs for defence, and establishing laws concerning westward expansion. Despite its potential benefits, the Albany Plan of Union was ultimately rejected. Some colonies, fiercely independent, were hesitant to cede power to a central authority. The British Crown also disapproved, fearing a unified colonial government might become too independent and challenge their control.

Although the plan was not implemented, its significance is undeniable. The Albany Plan of Union stands as the first formal proposal for a unified government of all the British colonies in North America. It laid the groundwork for the ideas of colonial unity that would later fuel the American Revolution. Additionally, Franklin's influential political cartoon, which depicted a fragmented snake symbolizing the vulnerable colonies, helped popularize the concept of colonial union. The *Albany Plan of Union* may not have achieved its immediate goal, but it planted a crucial seed that would eventually blossom into the United States of America. (C. Stoddard, 2010, (Histori.com editors, 2023)

The official conflict of the French and Indian War was conducted by the King of England in 1756. Settlements were attacked in Pennsylvania. Franklin was nominated as military commander by the assembly. He was instructed to set up a fort in recently destroyed Moravian village called Gnadenhütten. Therefore, he was the most experienced person in the

assembly with some military operations. He took his son William along with him to advise him with his greater militia knowledge. Franklin did as instructed. Through fatigue from cold and wet clothes, he managed to set up the fort successfully, and on his return to Philadelphia, he was greeted by the people with respect. Even the governor himself had been afraid of taking over his office. Franklin stayed in the opposition in the assembly. (C. Stoddard, 2010, (Histori.com editors, 2023)

2.12 Stamp act

Britain won the French and Indian War after the arrival of General William Pitt in 1757. He spent and borrowed a lot of money during the war at Britain's expense, which left the Crown in debt of over 140 thousand pounds, a very large amount of money at that time. To fix the debt, the government of the Great Britain decided to let the colonies pay for the war expense. Franklin's autobiography mentions about a payment to the King: *"The House had sent up a Bill to the Governor granting a Sum of Sixty Thousand Pounds for the King's use (10000 pounds of which was subjected to the then General Lord Loudon), which Governor absolutely refused to pass the Compliance with his Instructions"* (Franklin 2003, P.159)

Franklin was immediately sent to London to seek an audience to the council as an agent of Pennsylvania with a written petition against these sanctions. He was not the only delegate for the colony to neglect the idea of paying the bill. Franklin had to wait a year for a speech in front of the parliament due to the unfairness towards the colonies, though before he was permitted to speak with the audience, the Stamp Act was set in motion in 1765. Direct taxation of all commercial and legal papers, newspapers, pamphlets, cards, almanacs, and dice. This act, along with a few others, led the colonists to write satires (for example: "An Edict of King of Prussia") and propaganda to stand up for their rights and ignite the fire of the Revolutionary War.

2.13 An Edict by the King of Prussia

After the implementation of the Stamp Act, Benjamin Franklin wrote a piece titled "An Edict of the King of Prussia", which was published in 1773. In this piece, Franklin assumed the role of the King of Prussia and articulated a satirical edict imposing taxes on goods and merchandise exported from and imported into the Island of Britain. It also mandated that all

ships traveling to or from Great Britain land at the Port of Königsberg to be unloaded, inspected, and subjected to the prescribed duties:

We do therefore hereby ordain and command, That from and after the Date of these Presents, there shall be levied and paid to our Officers of the Customs, on all Goods, Wares, and Merchandizes, and on all Grain and other Produce of the Earth exported from the said Island of Britain, and on all Goods of whatever Kind imported into the same, a Duty of Four and an Half per Cent. ad Valorem, for the Use of us and our Successors. And that the said Duty may more effectually be collected, We do hereby ordain, that all Ships or Vessels bound from Great Britain to any other Part of the World, or from any other Part of the World to Great Britain, shall in their respective Voyages touch at our Port of Königsberg, there to be unladen, searched, and charged with the said Duties. (Franklin, 2003, p. 204-205)

This information surrounding the “Island of Britain” describes it as the original territory of Germanic tribes that eventually evolved into a settlement. Franklin wanted to highlight the dangerous character of Great Britain over its colonies by portraying the various acts done by Great Britain from Prussia’s perspective. Even the mention of the Port of Königsberg served as a symbolic representation of the control of trade goods. Franklin created and published this writing as a means to emphasize the slavery faced by the colonies at the hands of the British, as he effectively conveyed this message to the wider public.

3 The Way to Wealth

In 1758, Benjamin Franklin wrote *The Way to Wealth*, also known as *Father Abraham's Sermon*. *The Way to Wealth* offers valuable wisdom on achieving success and a good life through hard work and dedication. The essay takes the form of a conversation between Father Abraham and a group of people talking about high taxes and economic poverty. Father Abraham, who represents wisdom, talks about the importance of working hard, managing time well, and having self-discipline to overcome challenges and achieve financial security.

Father Abraham also highlights the negative effects of laziness, idleness, and putting things off until later. Instead, he promotes the benefits of hard work, never giving up, and taking care of oneself so the essay serves as a guide for people to make great profits from their situations, work towards their goals, and improve their financial well-being. (Franklin 1986, p. 7)

3.1 Industry, Frugality, and Self-Reliance

The opening part of Benjamin Franklin's *The Way to Wealth* introduces us to achieving financial security and personal fulfillment. Through the fictional character of Father Abraham, Franklin created rules based on three principles: industry, frugality, and self-reliance.

Firstly, Father Abraham says that working hard makes all aspects of life much easier. This means that you will be more successful if you put in the effort and do not give up. Being lazy, on the other hand, leads to wasted time and missed opportunities as we do not get more time, so we need to use it wisely. Father Abraham wants people to understand that time is precious and should not be spent on items that do not help them achieve their goals. By emphasizing the importance of time, Franklin encourages people to be proactive in their daily lives and to see wasted moments as missed opportunities to move forward:

"Lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough, always proves little enough." (Franklin 1986, p. 12)

Another milestone is to save money. It promotes the idea of being careful with money and making wise financial decisions. Father Abraham warns people about the dangers of wanting material goods that are not necessary, as it is better to save some money for the future, just in case a bad event unexpected happens. These resources emphasize the importance of living within one's means and avoiding getting into debt. By encouraging people to be careful with money, the essay encourages readers to think about their finances in the long term and to prioritize their future security over fleeting desires:

"If you would be wealthy, think of saving, as well as of getting. The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her out-goes are greater than her incomes." (Franklin 1986, p. 19)

The essay also explains that working hard can help you achieve success. If you are always trying your best and not giving up, you will be more likely to reach your goals. It argues that by working hard, people can achieve more with less difficulty, which ultimately leads to a better life. Here, Franklin promotes the idea that success is not only a matter of luck but rather a consequence of self-discipline and putting in an effort:

"Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise, as poor Richard says." (Franklin 1986, p. 13)

Finally, Father Abraham tells us of the significance of taking care of ourselves. This rule suggests that people are responsible for their own choices and actions. The essay influences people from relying on others and promotes responsible financial practices that prioritize long-term stability over short-term happiness. The chapter also equips readers with tools to deal with financial struggles and build a secure future.

4 John Adams' Opinion of Benjamin Franklin

John Adams and Benjamin Franklin found themselves working together in Paris during the Revolutionary War. While both shared the goal of securing French military support for the American cause, in their diplomatic ways there were great differences.

In the article *John Adams' Opinion of Benjamin Franklin* by William B. Evans, published in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* in 1968, readers can learn about the complex relationship between these two men.

4.1 Contrasting Styles

Adams admired Franklin's intellect and his success in forging alliances. He knew that Franklin played an important role in convincing the French to back the American nation, but he also had some reservations about Franklin's methods. He felt Franklin was sometimes too willing to bend to the wishes of the French court, particularly the French Foreign Minister Vergennes. Adams also believed in a more assertive approach to diplomacy. He disagreed with Franklin's initial unwillingness to notify the American Revolutionary government of Adams' presence in Paris as he thought it was vital to directly communicate America's position and its growing confidence:

“Congress had seen Franklin and me together before them above a year, i.e. from May, 1775, to the autumn of 1776. They had seen me active and alert in every branch of business. (...) On the contrary, they had seen Franklin, from day to day, sitting in silence, a great part of his time fast asleep in his chair. He was employed on committees, more in compliance with the prejudices of the people in Europe and America, than for any use he was, or any service he performed.” (Adams to Mercy Warren, Aug. 8, 1807, Adams-Warren Letters, p. 431)

One specific incident highlighted this difference in styles. Adams became caught up in a disagreement with Vergennes over currency exchange rates and the disagreement led to Vergennes demanding a halt on all communication with the British until the American government provided detailed instructions.

4.2 Beyond Politics

Evans also wrote about the personal side of John Adams and Benjamin Franklin's working relationship. Even with their differences, they could still work together effectively on big issues, such as revising Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* or the trip together to meet with a British representative in 1776, which was shared experience during some great moments in the war and an evidence of how Adams reacted to a portrayal of Franklin and America in Paris. Adams also found some aspects of European social life unsettling, while others amused him. We also learn about his interactions with French officials and his observations of Parisian social life. This gives us an insight into the cultural differences the American delegates faced. Furthermore, Franklin worried about misunderstandings and misinterpretations of his actions, especially by Adams as he urged Adams not to believe rumors and gossip, stressing the importance of clear communication and cooperation in their diplomatic mission. This exchange shows complexities of personal relationships and political manoeuvring during a time of war and uncertainty:

The King sometimes smiled, sometimes snickered, but said very little. After sometime upon a visit to the Royal manufactory of Porcelaine ... he gave secret orders to have a chamber pot made of the finest materials and most exquisite workmanship with the most exact portrait of the Grand Franklin painted on the bottom of it on the inside; and this most elegant piece of Furniture for a lady's bedchamber, the King presented to the Duchess with his own hand, that she might have the satisfaction of contemplating the image of her great philosopher and politician whenever she had occasion to look at it. (Adams to Mercy Warren, Aug. 3, 1807, The Adams Papers, (microfilm), Reel 118)

Evans's also mentions the role of Mercy Otis Warren causing the tension between Adams and Franklin. When Warren published their private letters, it caused a social divergence between the two men, requiring friends to intervene and help them resolve the conflict. This problem highlighted the difficulty of maintaining relationships under the pressures of revolution and public scrutiny:

Unfortunately for the preservation of harmony between these old friends, there appeared references to the course of Mr. Adams which . . . coming upon him at a time when his feelings had not entirely recovered from the blow received in the election [of 1800], created

extraordinary irritation. He proceeded at once to address directly to Mrs. Warren a series of ten letters, in the course of which he went largely into the defence of himself... without sparing his indignation against her. ("Correspondence between John Adams and Mercy Warren . . .," Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Fifth Series, IV (1878), 318.)

In the end, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin both played an important role in creating the United States, and the complex relationship between them, as explored in Evans' article, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of diplomacy during the American Revolution. Despite Adams' direct approach versus Franklin's willingness to compromise, they achieved significant results for the new American nation. The situation with Mercy Otis Warren's letters shows the difficulty of maintaining good relationships during wartime, especially when things are uncertain. However, it also shows that Adams and Franklin were still determined to help America succeed and did not let personal ambitions obstruct that goal.

5 The *Declaration of Independence* & the *Constitution*

5.1 Franklin's Role in the *Declaration of Independence*

In June 1776, the Second Continental Congress decided to declare independence from Britain. To draft the *Declaration of Independence*, they formed a committee consisting of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert R. Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin. Although Thomas Jefferson was chosen to write the first draft, Franklin's role in the process was crucial. (Bloom 2008, p. 4)

Franklin was known for his wisdom and skill in editing and improving written work. He suggested several changes to Jefferson's draft, making the language clearer and more powerful. His editorial skills were invaluable in shaping the definitive version of the *Declaration*. The document declared that all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It listed the grievances against King George III and stated that the colonies were now free and independent states. (Bloom 2008, p. 3)

After the *Declaration of Independence* was adopted on July 4, 1776, the American colonies faced a difficult war against Britain. Franklin was sent to France as a diplomat to seek support for the American cause. Franklin's efforts in France were crucial for the American Revolution. He successfully negotiated a military alliance with France in 1778. This alliance provided the American colonies with much-needed supplies, money, and soldiers. The support from France played a key role in the American victory over Britain. (Bloom 2008, p. 4)

One of Franklin's significant achievements in France was securing French financial support for the American cause. The French government agreed to provide loans and grants to the American colonies, which helped them sustain the war effort. His ability to build strong relationships with French officials and gain their trust was vital in obtaining this support.

Franklin's diplomatic skills were also evident in his ability to navigate the complex political landscape in France. He maintained good relations with the French government and the public, which was essential for securing long-term support. His efforts to promote the American cause in French society through writings and public appearances helped to garner widespread sympathy and support for the American Revolution. (Bloom 2008, p. 66)

5.2 Franklin's Role in the *Constitution*

In 1787, Franklin attended the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. At the age of 81, he was one of the oldest delegates, but his age did not stop him from being an active and influential participant. Despite his frail health, Franklin was present at nearly all the sessions and made significant contributions. The delegates at the convention came from different states and had different interests and opinions. There were many heated debates, and it seemed impossible to reach an agreement. Franklin often stepped in to calm tempers and encourage compromise. He understood that for the new government to be successful, it needed the support of all the states, so finding common ground was very important. (Bloom 2008, p. 68)

Franklin's proposal for the structure of Congress is a perfect example of his influence. The delegates were divided over how states should be represented in the new government. The larger states wanted representation based on population, while the smaller states wanted equal representation for all states. Franklin suggested a compromise that led to the creation of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state would have equal representation in the Senate, while in the House of Representatives, representation would be based on population. This Great Compromise was essential in moving forward and ultimately shaping the legislative structure of the United States. (Kerry 2012, p. 61-62)

Another significant contribution of Franklin was his advocacy for a single executive leader, or president, rather than a committee of leaders. He believed that a single executive would provide clear and decisive leadership. While there were concerns about the potential for a president to become too powerful, Franklin's arguments helped convince the delegates that a strong executive branch was necessary for an effective government. (Bloom 2008, p. 118)

He also played a role in the debate over including a Bill of Rights. Although he did not live to see the Bill of Rights added to the Constitution, his influence was felt in the discussions. He believed in protecting individual liberties and strongly advocated freedom of speech, press, and religion. His views helped shape the thinking of other delegates, and his legacy contributed to the eventual adoption of the Bill of Rights. (Morgan 2002, p. 208)

Franklin always hosted informal gatherings and dinners, as he used to do in London with Richard Price, where delegates could discuss issues more relaxedly. These social events helped build relationships and trust among the delegates, making it easier to reach agreements during the formal sessions. Franklin's earlier work also paved the groundwork for the ideas discussed at the convention. He strongly advocated for colonial unity and self-governance long before the convention. (Kerry 2012, p. 136)

Lastly, Franklin's scientific and philosophical background influenced his approach to government, and his principles guided his thinking during the Constitutional Convention, where he encouraged the delegates to think rationally about the issues they faced. (Bloom 2008, p. 68)

6 Franklin's Anti-Slavery Views

In the world in which Franklin was born, slavery was common in the American colonies, especially in the South, where farms relied heavily on enslaved people to grow crops. Even though the North relied more on indentured servants, Franklin himself bought two slaves. This decision was likely because he thought it would be financially beneficial.

Franklin's newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, also shows his involvement with slavery. From 1729 it was filled with ads for people trying to sell slaves or find those who had run away. As the owner, Franklin made money by allowing these ads in his fair profit publications. In some cases, he even wrote the ads himself. In the *Observations* of 1751, he observed in passing that "almost every Slave" is "by Nature a Thief." (Franklin 2004, p. 37) a particularly ugly remark since by the definition the owner of a slave steals labour from that enslaved woman or man for life

On the other hand, The *Gazette* also published messages against slavery. This shows that Franklin was at least willing to let people express opposing views. His personal writings also hint at some early doubts. After visiting the "Negro School" in Philadelphia in 1763, he said he believed black people were just as smart as white people. This was a very different idea from what most people thought back then. (Franklin 2004, p. 37)

These doubts developed from Franklin's own independent beliefs. He valued reason and freedom for everyone. It must have been hard for him to accept that slavery took away those fundamentals of life. However, there were strong reasons why he might not have spoken out against it right away. Firstly, not owning slaves could have put him at a disadvantage. Everyone around him seemed to accept it, so not doing the same might have made life harder. Additionally, Franklin was very focused on getting ahead in life and improving himself.

A major turning point came in 1787 when the *U.S. Constitution* was ratified. This document included compromises the Southern colonies that protected slavery in law, particularly the fugitive slave clause, which deeply troubled Franklin. Here was a man who had championed liberty throughout his life, who had even signed the *Declaration of Independence*, a document that declared all men are created equal. The *Constitution's*

acceptance of slavery must have felt as a betrayal of all aspects of the revolution that he believed in. This realization pushed Franklin to become a vocal opponent of slavery:

On the Slave Trade (25 March 1790)

To The Editor Of The Federal Gazette

Sir,

Reading last night in your excellent paper the speech of Mr. Jackson in Congress, against their meddling with the affair of slavery, or attempting to mend the condition of the slaves, it put me in mind of a similar one made about one hundred years since, by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Divan of Algiers, which may be seen in Martin's account of his consulship, anno 1687. It was against granting the petition of the Sect called Erika, or Purists, who prayed for the abolition of piracy and slavery as being unjust.—Mr. Jackson does not quote it; perhaps he has not seen it.—If therefore some of its reasonings are to be found in his eloquent speech, it may only show that men's interests and intellects operate and are operated on with surprising similarity in all countries and climates, when under similar circumstances.—The African's speech, as translated, is as follows:

“Allah Bismillah, &c. God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet. “Have these Erika considered the consequences of granting their petition? If we cease our cruises against the christians, how shall we be furnished with the commodities their countries produce, and which are so necessary for us? If we forbear to make slaves of their people, who, in this hot climate, are to cultivate our lands? Who are to perform the common labours of our city, and in our families? Must we not then be our own slaves? And is there not more compassion and more favour due to us as Mussulmen, than to these christian dogs? We have now above 50,000 slaves in and near Algiers. —This number, if not kept up by fresh supplies, will soon diminish, and be gradually annihilated. If we then cease taking and plundering the Infidel ships, and making slaves of the seamen and passengers, our lands will become of no value for want of cultivation; the rents of houses in the city will sink one half; and the revenues of government arising from its share of prizes be totally destroyed. And for what? to gratify the whims of a whimsical sect! who would have us not only forbear making more slaves, but even to manumit those we have.—But who is to indemnify their masters for the loss? Will the state do it? Is our treasury sufficient? Will the Erika do it? Can they do it? Or would they, to do what they think justice to the slaves, do a greater injustice to the owners? (...) (Franklin 2004, p. 369-370)

In this letter to the editor, Benjamin Franklin uses satire to criticize the arguments used by people who defend slavery. Here, he does not directly attack slavery itself but instead exposes the flaws in the logic used by those who support it. Franklin presents a fictional speech by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a leader from Algiers who argues against ending slavery. This speech uses arguments that echoed to those used by slaveholders in America, such as Mr Jackson, who Franklin mentions earlier.

Both Ibrahim and Mr. Jackson defend slavery based on supposed benefits. They claim that without slaves, their economies would suffer, their lands would not be cultivated, and their way of life would crumble. They even try to justify slavery by portraying the enslaved people as inferior.

Moreover, by comparing these arguments, Franklin aims to show how ridiculous they are. If these defenses were truly valid, then would not any society be able to enslave another for their own benefit? Definitely not. Franklin uses humor and a doubtful example to highlight the hypocrisy of arguments that defend human bondage based on economic gain or cultural superiority.

This satirical approach shows how he went from someone who may have initially accepted slavery as a fact of life to someone who actively fought against it by exposing the flawed logic used to defend it.

In early 1790, as president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, Franklin signed a memorandum to Congress calling for an end to slavery. This Society had a multi-pronged approach. It advocated for gradual emancipation, meaning enslaved people would be slowly freed over time. It also worked to educate the public about the cruelty of slavery and how wrong it was. Finally, it lobbied the government to pass laws that would eventually abolish slavery altogether. Franklin, a highly respected statesman, lent his considerable reputation to this cause, giving it much more weight and influence, though it did not change any state or federal law.

One of Franklin's most significant contributions to the abolitionist movement was a petition submitted to Congress. This document, which he co-authored, boldly challenged the legality of slavery and urged Congress to take steps toward ending it. This act of defiance

from such a respected figure was a major boost for the anti-slavery movement. It exposed the hypocrisy at the heart of the young nation: a country founded on principles of liberty while still allowing a system that enslaved people.

Franklin's later writings also show his changed views. He spoke out strongly against the African slave trade, highlighting its barbarity and the economic advantages of having a workforce made up of free people. He even dreamed of a day when the United States and European nations would work together to wipe out slavery completely, not just in America, but around the world. The African (cross-Atlantic) slave trade would end within two decades of Franklin's death.

Even in his later years, Franklin was not a radical abolitionist as some others, such as William Lloyd Garrison. Franklin favored a more gradual approach, with emancipation happening slowly along with economic reforms. This might have been because he worried that immediate and complete abolition could destabilize the already fragile social and economic order of the time.

Despite these limitations, Benjamin Franklin's transformation on the issue of slavery is a significant moment in American history. It shows the power of conscience and how people can change their minds in the face of injustice. His activism, along with the work of countless others, helped pave the way for the eventual abolition of slavery in the United States. (Waldstreicher 2011, p. 495)

7 Franklin in the Enlightenment

Beyond Franklin's role as a revolutionary figure was a brilliant mind that greatly influenced the Enlightenment, which lasted about the 18th century, was a movement that stressed reason, logic, and scientific inquiry over tradition and religious beliefs. Philosophers of this time believed that human knowledge could solve problems and improve society. They supported critical thinking, questioning old beliefs, and seeking answers based on observation and experimentation. This intellectual revolution spread across Europe and North America, affecting art, literature, and political thought. (Bloom 2008, p. 49)

Although Franklin did not have formal scientific training, his curiosity led to important discoveries. His most famous work was with electricity. Fascinated by lightning, he experimented with charged Leyden jars (early capacitors) and kites with metal keys. Through these, Franklin suggested the single-fluid theory of electricity, which proposed that electricity was transferred from one object to another. Though later refined, this idea was a substantial part of understanding electricity. (Bloom 2008, p. 3)

However, Franklin did not stop at electricity. He mapped and named the Gulf Stream, an ocean current that greatly affected travel across the Atlantic. He also invented bifocals for people needing glasses for near and far vision. Additionally, his Franklin Stove improved heating efficiency while reducing smoke pollution, showing his concern for practicality and public health. (Morgan 2002, p. 7)

Franklin's approach to science was very much based on the tradition of the Enlightenment spirit that other personalities such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who engaged in science, literature, and politics as well. He was not only interested in personal discovery. He believed in sharing knowledge for the common good. He founded the American Philosophical Society, a place for scientific discussion and collaboration, ensuring North America was part of the global exchange of ideas. He actively communicated with leading scientists of his time, encouraging international cooperation. (Waldstreicher 2011, p. 10)

Franklin's Enlightenment values also influenced his political views. He supported representative government based on reason and public debate, which was very different from the rule by hereditary monarchy. His editing work on the *Declaration of Independence* and the *American Constitution* showed his belief in using reason to create a just and democratic society.

His original occupation developed from an apprentice printer to a successful publisher, he knew the value of spreading knowledge among people living in a civil society. His printing press was a powerful tool for promoting Enlightenment ideas. He published pamphlets, newspapers, and scientific papers, making them accessible to a broader audience and encouraging public discussion. He advocated for education, religious tolerance, and civic participation through his writing, all key parts of the Enlightenment. (Waldstreicher 2011, p. 108)

Franklin's scientific work was not merely theoretical curiosity. He believed in using knowledge for practical benefits. His invention of the lightning rod, inspired by his electrical experiments, aimed to protect buildings from lightning. Similarly, with its improved efficiency and reduced smoke, the Franklin stove addressed the need for safer and more effective home heating. This focus on practical applications solidified his reputation as a civic scientist who connected scientific discovery with real-world solutions. (Bloom 2008, p. 3)

Franklin's business sense made him an important figure in the early American economy. He supported free markets and competition in business, which are central to early capitalism. His focus on hard work was an important part of the American work ethic. Through his writings on economics, he gave practical advice for success and promoted a sense of self-improvement.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, Franklin was also a talented writer and satirist. His newspaper played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and creating a sense of American identity. He addressed social justice and religious tolerance issues, challenging the status quo and encouraging critical thinking. His wit and humour provided moral lessons and practical advice in an engaging way. Through his writing, Franklin informed and entertained, thereby shaping the culture of colonial America.

Though completely loyal to America, Benjamin Franklin valued international collaboration. His scientific work crossed national boundaries. He communicated and exchanged ideas with leading European scientists, e.g. Peter Collinson and Joseph Priestley, contributing to global scientific knowledge. His diplomatic skills, developed while representing the colonies in England, were crucial during the American Revolution. Franklin's ability to handle international relations was key in getting French support for the war. (Bloom 2008, p. 91)

In conclusion, Benjamin Franklin was a multifaceted genius: a scientist, inventor, writer, politician, and diplomat. His life and work shape the spirit of the Enlightenment, showing the power of reason, curiosity, and a commitment to improving society. As we face the challenges of the 21st century, Franklin's legacy offers valuable lessons for fostering scientific progress, building a more just and fairer world, and promoting understanding and cooperation across borders.

8 Franklin's Religious Beliefs

Franklin's views on religion were not as straightforward as those of many of his contemporaries. His beliefs were shaped by his experiences, education, and the Enlightenment ideas that were prevalent during his time.

Franklin was born in Boston, a city with strong Puritan roots. His parents, Josiah and Abiah Franklin, were devout Puritans. This religious environment had a significant influence on young Franklin. He attended church regularly with his family and learned about Christian doctrines and the Bible. However, as he grew older, Franklin began questioning some strict Puritan beliefs. (Morgan 2002, p. 16)

In his teenage years, Franklin was particularly interested in books about science and philosophy, which introduced him to the ideas of the Enlightenment. This cultural movement emphasized reason, individualism, and scepticism of traditional authority, including religious authority. Influenced by these ideas, Franklin developed a more personal and less orthodox view of religion. (Bloom 2008, p. 49)

Franklin's questioning of traditional religious beliefs intensified during his time in London in the 1720s. He read works by prominent Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and David Hume, who challenged established religious doctrines and promoted the use of reason. Franklin's exposure to these ideas led him to adopt a more deistic view of religion. (Bloom 2008, p. 42)

Deism is a belief system that emerged during the Enlightenment. Deists reject the idea of revealed religion, such as the Bible and miracles. Instead, they believe that the best way to understand God is through reason and observation of the natural world. Franklin found these ideas appealing and began to identify himself as a deist. (Morgan 2002, p. 17)

Despite his deistic beliefs, Franklin accepted religion altogether. He saw value in the moral teachings of Christianity and believed that religion played an important role in promoting virtuous behavior and social order. In his autobiography, Franklin wrote about his respect for Jesus Christ as a moral teacher, although he did not accept the divinity of Christ or the supernatural aspects of Christianity. (Bloom 2008, p. 49)

Franklin's pragmatic approach to religion is evident in his efforts to promote religious tolerance and unity. He believed that religious differences should not divide people and that all religions should be respected as long as they promoted virtue and morality. In Philadelphia, where Franklin lived for most of his life, he supported the construction of various religious institutions, including churches, synagogues, and meeting houses for different denominations. (Morgan 2002, p. 276)

One of Franklin's notable contributions to religious tolerance was his involvement in establishing the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751. The hospital was open to people of all religious backgrounds, reflecting Franklin's belief in caring for the sick and needy regardless of their faith. He also played a key role in founding the University of Pennsylvania, one of the first institutions of higher learning in America to adopt a non-sectarian approach to education. (Bloom 2008, p. 2)

Franklin's views on religion also influenced his political philosophy. He believed that a just and effective government should be based on reason and the consent of the governed rather than on religious authority. This belief was reflected in his support for the separation of church and state, a principle that would later be enshrined in the *Constitution*.

Despite his deistic beliefs, Franklin occasionally used religious language and references in his writings and speeches. He understood the power of religious rhetoric to inspire and motivate people. For example, during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Franklin suggested that the delegates begin their sessions with a prayer, even though he did not believe in the efficacy of prayer. He recognized that invoking God's guidance could help foster a sense of unity and purpose among the delegates. (Bloom 2008, p. 49)

Franklin's religious beliefs were also reflected in his conduct. He developed a list of thirteen virtues that he aimed to practice daily, including temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. Although these virtues were not explicitly religious, they were consistent with the moral teachings of Christianity and other religious traditions. (Bloom 2008, p. 76)

Franklin's approach to religion was marked by a commitment to reason, tolerance, and practical morality. He valued the ethical teachings of religion and believed that they could contribute to the well-being of society. At the same time, he rejected dogma and superstition, advocating for a more rational and inclusive understanding of faith.

In his later years, Franklin's religious views continued to evolve. He maintained his belief in a Creator and the importance of virtuous living but became more skeptical of organized religion and its institutions. In a letter to Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College, written in 1790, Franklin described his beliefs as a "system of morality" based on the principles of "natural religion." He expressed doubts about the divinity of Jesus and the authenticity of the Bible, but he also acknowledged the positive impact of Christian teachings on society. (Bloom 2008, p. 48)

Franklin's approach to religion set him apart from many of his contemporaries. He was neither an atheist nor a strict adherent to any particular religious doctrine. Instead, he sought a middle ground emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior and social harmony. His pragmatic and inclusive view of religion reflected his broader Enlightenment ideals and commitment to reason and human progress.

In summary, Benjamin Franklin's religious beliefs were shaped by his Puritan upbringing, his exposure to Enlightenment ideas, and his personal experiences. He identified as a deist, valuing reason and observation over religious dogma. Despite his skepticism of organized religion, Franklin respected the moral teachings of Christianity and advocated for religious tolerance and unity. His pragmatic approach to religion was reflected in his support for charitable institutions and political philosophy.

9 Conclusion

Benjamin Franklin's life and contributions are a testament to the transformative power of intellect and ingenuity in shaping personal success and national history, demonstrating the essential role of civil society and democracy in fostering human progress. Franklin's journey from Boston to Philadelphia was a geographical relocation and a symbolic departure from the constraints of family expectations and religious orthodoxy. His pursuit of knowledge and independence led him to embrace various roles—from printer and entrepreneur to scientist and statesman. His diversity of pursuits underscored his belief in the power of education and self-improvement, principles he championed throughout his life and foundational to a vibrant civil society.

His early experiences as an apprentice and journeyman in the printing trade laid the foundation for his future successes. Part of that success included becoming independent of his family and from puritan Boston. Franklin's entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to hard work enabled him to navigate the challenges of business partnerships and financial setbacks, ultimately establishing himself as a prominent printer and publisher in Philadelphia. This industriousness reflects the democratic ideals of self-reliance and personal responsibility.

Beyond this, Franklin's intellectual curiosity drove him to explore scientific phenomena, most notably through his experiments with electricity. His groundbreaking discoveries, including the famous kite experiment, advanced scientific understanding and secured his reputation as an international figure in natural philosophy. His contributions to meteorology and oceanography, such as mapping the Gulf Stream, highlighted his commitment to practical discoveries that benefited humanity, exemplifying the civic responsibility inherent in scientific inquiry.

Franklin's inventions further underscore his practical approach to science. The Franklin Stove, designed to heat homes while efficiently reducing smoke emissions, exemplifies his concern for public health and environmental sustainability. His bifocal glasses, addressing everyday challenges through scientific innovation, demonstrate his innovative spirit.

Central to Franklin's philosophy was the belief that knowledge should be shared for the common good. He founded the American Philosophical Society, a hub for intellectual exchange and collaboration among scientists, ensuring that American scholars were integrated into the global scientific community. It still exists today. His correspondence and collaboration with leading European thinkers exemplify his commitment to international scientific cooperation, transcending national boundaries in pursuit of shared knowledge and progress.

Franklin's Enlightenment values profoundly influenced his political ideology. As a staunch advocate for representative government and individual liberties, Franklin was pivotal in drafting foundational American documents such as the *Declaration of Independence* and the Constitution. His belief in reason as the cornerstone of governance challenged the prevailing notion of divine right monarchy, paving the way for a democratic experiment that would inspire revolutions around the world.

As an entrepreneur and publisher, Franklin wielded his printing press as a potent tool for disseminating Enlightenment ideals. He engaged a wide audience in debates on civic responsibility, education, and religious tolerance through newspapers, pamphlets, and almanacs. His writings, characterized by wit and pragmatism, not only informed but also entertained, shaping public opinion and fostering a sense of American identity during a crucial period of colonial history. This engagement with the public sphere is a cornerstone of democratic society.

Franklin's legacy extends beyond his scientific and political contributions. His entrepreneurial spirit and advocacy for free markets laid the groundwork for early American capitalism, emphasizing hard work, thrift, and self-improvement. His insights into economics and business ethics continue to resonate in economic theory and policy discussions, reflecting the intersection of democratic ideals with economic practices.

Franklin's contributions extended far beyond the realms of business and science. His role as a diplomat during the American Revolution demonstrated his political acumen and commitment to the principles of liberty and self-governance. As a drafter of the Declaration of Independence and a key negotiator during peace talks with Britain and France, Franklin

played an important role in securing America's independence and establishing its place on the world stage.

Throughout his life, Franklin remained committed to civic duty and public service. His leadership as postmaster of Philadelphia and advocacy for civic improvements, such as fire protection and street cleaning, reflected his belief in the importance of community and collective responsibility. This dedication to public service is a hallmark of a robust civil society.

Franklin's legacy is perhaps best encapsulated in his concept of the Junto Club, a forum for intellectual exchange and mutual improvement. The Junto club exemplified Franklin's belief in the power of dialogue and collaboration to effect positive change, a principle that resonates in his numerous inventions and civic initiatives. This emphasis on collective effort and community engagement is vital to the health and sustainability of democratic institutions.

10 Resumé

Benjamin Franklin je jednou z nejvýznamnějších postav americké historie, jehož vliv sahá daleko za hranice jeho doby. Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřila na jeho životní cestu, od skromných začátků v Bostonu až po jeho úspěchy ve Filadelfii, a na jeho přínosy v mnoha oblastech lidské činnosti.

Franklin byl nejen vynikající tiskař a podnikatel, ale také vynálezce, vědec, diplomat a státník. Tato rozmanitost aktivit zdůrazňovala jeho víru v sílu vzdělání, sebe pozvednutí a principy, kterých se stal celý život zastáncem. Jeho rané zkušenosti jako učně v tiskařském řemesle položily základ pro jeho budoucí úspěchy. Franklinův podnikatelský duch a odhodlání k tvrdé práci mu umožnily překonat výzvy partnerských vztahů a finančních problémů, což ho nakonec etablovalo jako významného tiskaře a vydavatele ve Filadelfii.

Franklinova intelektuální zvědavost ho vedla k průzkumu vědeckých jevů, především skrze vlastní experimenty s elektřinou. Jeho průlomové objevy v oblasti elektřiny, včetně slavného pokusu s drakem, posunuly vědecké poznání a zajistily mu pověst mezinárodní osobnosti v oblasti přírodní filozofie. Kromě elektřiny se Franklinova vědecká zdatnost rozšířila i na meteorologii. Důkladně zmapoval Golský proud, jenž byl klíčový pro transatlantickou dopravu. Jeho studie v oceánografii nejenže posunuly navigační vědu, ale také zdůraznily jeho závazek k praktickým objevům, které by mohly prospět lidstvu jako celku.

Franklinovy vynálezy dále podtrhují jeho praktický přístup k vědě. Franklinův sporák, navržený pro efektivní vytápění domácností při snižování emisí kouře, ilustruje jeho zájem o veřejné zdraví a udržitelnost životního prostředí. Bifokální brýle, určené pro lidi se slabozrakostí jak v blízkém, tak vzdáleném zorném poli, ukazují jeho inovačního ducha v řešení každodenních výzev prostřednictvím vědecké inovace. Centrálním bodem Franklinovy filozofie bylo přesvědčení, že znalosti by měly být sdíleny pro společné dobro. Založil Americkou filozofickou společnost, centrum intelektuální výměny a spolupráce mezi vědci, kterými tak zajistil integraci amerických učenců do globální vědecké komunity. Jeho korespondence a spolupráce s předními evropskými mysliteli ilustrují jeho závazek k mezinárodní vědecké spolupráci, která překračovala národní hranice ve prospěch sdílených znalostí a pokroku.

Franklinovy osvícenské hodnoty hluboce ovlivnily i jeho politickou ideologii. Byl horlivým zastáncem zastupitelské vlády a individuálních svobod, a hrál klíčovou roli při vzniku významných amerických dokumentů, jako jsou *Deklarace nezávislosti* a *Ústava Spojených států nezávislých*. Jeho víra v rozum významně vyzvala tehdejší představu o monarchii založené na božském právu, otevírajíc cestu demokratickému experimentu, který inspiroval revoluce po celém světě.

Jako podnikatel a vydavatel využíval Franklin svou tiskařskou lisovnu jako mocný nástroj pro šíření osvícenských ideálů. Zapojil široké publikum do debat o občanské odpovědnosti, vzdělávání a náboženské toleranci prostřednictvím novin, letáků a almanachů. Jeho spisy, charakterizované duchapřítomností a pragmatickým přístupem nejen informovaly, ale také bavily, formovaly veřejné mínění a posilovaly smysl pro americkou identitu v kritickém období koloniální historie. Franklinovo dědictví sahá daleko za hranice oblastí byznysu a vědy. Jeho podnikatelský duch a obhajoba volných trhů položily základy raného amerického kapitalismu, zdůrazňující tvrdou práci, šetrnost a sebe pozvednutí.

Jeho role diplomata během americké revoluce ukázala jeho politické nadání a závazek k principům svobody a samosprávy. Jako autor *Deklarace nezávislosti* a klíčový vyjednaváč během mírových rozhovorů s Británií a Francií sehrál důležitou roli při zajišťování nezávislosti Ameriky a ustavení její pozice ve světě.

Po celý život zůstal Franklin zavázán občanské povinnosti a veřejné službě. Jeho vedení jako poštmistra Filadelfie a obhajoba občanských zlepšení, jako je požární ochrana a úklid ulic, odrážely jeho víru v důležitost komunity a kolektivní odpovědnosti.

Franklinovo dědictví je možná nejlépe ztělesněno jeho konceptem Junto klubu, fóra pro intelektuální výměnu a vzájemné zdokonalování. Junto ilustrovalo Franklinovu víru v sílu dialogu a spolupráce na dosahování pozitivních změn, princip, který rezonuje v jeho mnoha vynálezech a občanských iniciativách.

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