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Statesmen Who Believe



in the Shadows

By Jennifer Jensen

He had a great classical education. He studied the great poets, philosophers, and scholars. Often a great education marks the beginning of a great leader and statesman. Vladimir I. Lenin did become a leader but he did not become a great statesman. What went wrong?

The American Founding Fathers would agree that a great education must begin with a great foundation. Lenin enjoyed a great education but he was missing the correct foundation. Lenin was not taught to have faith in a Divine Being higher than himself. Consequently, he did not receive a solid core foundational understanding of good and bad, right and wrong.

Our Founders believed that society must have a religious base or foundation to be successful. One specific religion is not necessary but basic beliefs that cover all religions *are* necessary and must be encouraged. The founders agreed with this universal creed penned by Benjamin Franklin,

Here is my creed: I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That He governs it by His providence. That He ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable

service we render to Him is in doing good to His other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points of all sound religion.^a

How does faith form a solid foundation for statesmanship and good government? Looking more closely at Franklin's creed explains it.

"I believe in one God, the creator of the universe."
Lacking faith in God means believing no one is there, no one is watching, caring or inspiring. Those without faith have no one in whom to place their hopes but themselves and other people. Like a child without a parent, those without faith have no guide, no help: man is abandoned to his own devices.

Having faith liberates the statesman to trust in Divine Providence; to believe that God is there to inspire and bless. But faith in God is more than just knowledge; having true faith is belief coupled with action. Based on this belief, action is not just a by-product but an actual force that drives change. Because faith encompasses more than just knowledge and is the foundation for all other education, the absence of faith leaves a void, even a vacuum, which must be filled.

As men search for a foundation, for something to fill the void, they often look in the wrong places as Lenin did. Eventually, Lenin found what he thought was the answer: communism. Lenin read Marx and Engels; he not only agreed with what they wrote but began writing, speaking out, and gathering others to the cause. Even when he was imprisoned for two years and then exiled to Siberia for another three years, he continued to write, gather supporters, and discuss ways to take over Russia and forcefully socialize it. Later, when he was forced to leave the country to escape arrest, he still continued his communist activities.

For Lenin, communism took the place of religion giving him a skewed view of what was right and wrong. Lenin's belief in communism coupled with his actions to move it forward became the foundation for everything he did. This is how communism works; it takes on the characteristics of a religion,

Men are assimilated to it [communism] by all the power of their own nature, and by all their reverence for religion. Their very faith and charity are perverted, and their noblest sympathies and their sublimest hopes are made subservient to their basest passions and their most groveling propensities. Here is the secret strength of socialism, and here is the principle source of its danger.^b

Not everyone chooses something quite so terrible as communism or socialism but no matter what replaces faith, a foundational belief in God is not there. George Washington knew how vital faith is to good government,

Of all dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. . . . Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?^c

"That He governs it by His providence."
The second part of Franklin's creed teaches that if God is governing, He is there: watching and aware. If He is governing, there must be laws He has provided: Divine laws, or natural laws, that do apply and must be followed for good government. An understanding of natural law teaches the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, thus building that solid foundation which permits private virtue and good statesmanship. Faith in God helps statesmen understand that man's laws must conform to natural law.

One mistaken belief of socialism is that eventually people will love that way of life making government no longer necessary; this has never proven true. Our Founding Fathers understood that man will accomplish much more under his own will than if forced by another. Lenin chose to ignore this natural law and form a despotic government allowing no freedoms whatsoever.

Under Lenin's rule, there was no freedom of religion; all religions were banned. There was no freedom of speech; anyone found criticizing the government

was imprisoned. There was no freedom of private property; all property was confiscated and turned over to the government: if a property owner resisted, he was imprisoned, tortured until he gave in, or summarily executed depending on the whim of the officials.

Not believing in a God means that man has the ultimate power and the final say. Where God does not govern, power is all that matters. A leader lacking faith in a Supreme Being will force everything to be done his way; he cannot leave anything to chance,

The man who lacks faith will be easily inclined to the view that he must do everything himself, that if men are not compelled, they will not act in desired ways, that someone or a group must provide a master plan else society will come to pieces, and chaos will reign. The man with faith in an order higher than himself can be content to leave other men to their devices, secure in his knowledge that God is not mocked, that right will triumph, and that his major task is to see he is not destroyed in the process.^d

“That He ought to be worshipped.”

The third of Franklin’s tenets teaches that God is to be worshipped. No one is above this duty; all men should worship God and nothing should be worshipped but God. No man is above any other man as far as God is concerned. The founders built on this principle in the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . .” They knew that all men are equal before God.

Without this foundational principal, there is nothing stopping man from fighting to be worshipped themselves. It is easy for people in positions of power, who lack faith, to believe that they are so powerful they can do anything; they can choose what is right or wrong for everyone. The idea that man is the ultimate in the universe comes easily,

Lacking a working belief in a transcendent God, men will play at being Gods. They cannot accept freedom because they cannot predict

the consequences of freedom. Hence, they are driven to more and more controls in order to have a predictable condition.^e

Under Lenin’s communism, the control over the people just kept getting tougher; Lenin quickly became a tyrannical dictator wanting total control over everything. Even those who were top communist officials were not immune. If they were targeted, every detail of their life would be microscopically examined; the smallest slip, the slightest nonconformity led to imprisonment. When Lenin couldn’t control what was heard over the airways, he announced that all radios must be turned in; anyone disobeying was sent to the prison camps. A favorite way of Lenin’s to increase control was to use everyone to spy on everyone else: if a man didn’t turn in his neighbor, he was sure to be turned in himself. Family members couldn’t even be trusted; children might slip and say something. Typical prison terms for even the smallest offence were between ten and twenty-five years.

“That the most acceptable service we render to Him is in doing good to His other children.”

The fourth part of Franklin’s creed plays a big role in the life of a statesman. Faith in God teaches men to care about and for each other. A neighbor’s freedom and happiness becomes as important as one’s own. In caring for “His other children,” public virtue is born. Public virtue promotes generosity, service, charity, and affection while curbing selfishness, greed, cupidity, and lust. This is the society the Founders wanted to bequeath; but only faith makes it possible.

Without faith, it is easy to think only of oneself: to not feel any guilt in stepping on others to get ahead or destroying others for one’s own gain. Lenin’s personal belief mirrors these thoughts, “We must hate—hatred is the basis of communism. Children must be taught to hate their parents. . . .”^f

Families meant nothing to Lenin; they were destroyed without a thought. Parents would be taken away while children were left behind destitute and alone. If family members were imprisoned, they were purposely separated and sent to different camps often never to see or hear from each other again. Millions of his people starved after Lenin and his government

forcefully took their harvest to support themselves in high style. If anyone, including hungry children, were found trying to sneak grain from the already harvested fields that now belonged to the government, they were sent to the prison camps as well.

“That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this.”

Few things compare to this last part of Franklin’s creed in explaining how our actions have meaning and consequence. Actions based on future accountability differ from other actions. A statesman with a true foundation of faith in God will base his leadership on natural law, public virtue, and man’s equality before God knowing he will be accountable. A statesman without a true foundation bases his leadership on selfishness, power, fame, and prestige.

Right from Lenin’s introduction to communism, he fought for power. Even before overthrowing the Russian government in the October Revolution, he was competing with others for supremacy. After taking control of the communist party, he was not satisfied until his opponents were eliminated or they became completely submissive to his will: Leon Trotsky would not submit; later he was found with his head crushed with an ax. Lenin was not satisfied until he achieved total power over Russia and all its people.

“Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”^g Lord Acton, in 19th Century England, penned these words. There are only so many governmental checks to stop power from corrupting; the most important check must be inside each statesman and must play a large part in each of his decisions and goals. The Russian government that Lenin set up had no checks. But even worse, anyone with faith in God was removed; those left to lead did so without any personal foundation. Why would Lenin remove all those who had spiritual faith? Because, “Deep spiritual convictions stand like a wall of resistance to challenge the teachings and practices of communism.”^h

Without faith existing in the majority of society, our form of government cannot remain. The Founders knew that without it our constitution would be doomed. John Adams referred to this when he wrote, “Our

constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”ⁱ When the correct foundation is missing, no laws can keep corruption in check.

These five religious tenets in Franklin’s creed, and all they imply, were accepted by the Founding Fathers as a necessary part of the education they wanted available in their new republic. They understood that knowledge not based in faith cannot support good government. Those with a great education cannot be just followers; they are leaders, they are statesmen. As a statesman, if they are without faith in a Supreme Being, the power they have will become corrupt much easier. Lenin followed the path the Founders would have predicted; he set up a government devoid of faith, freedom, virtue, and morality.

Although Lenin’s communistic government was introduced under the guise of helping his fellow Russians, it quickly turned into a power- and greed-led blood bath. Not until 65 years later, after hundreds of millions of his people were tortured and killed and the rest reduced to abject slavery, was the path Lenin marked interrupted. To this day, the Russian people have not fully recovered from Lenin’s leadership. Perhaps Lenin is an extreme example: many other examples can be noted throughout history. But one thing is certain: a statesman can either lead as a Lenin or he can lead as a Washington. The difference is in the foundation.

To be men and women of virtue, wisdom, diplomacy, and courage, who love liberty, statesmen must not only have a great education based on the classics but that great education must also be grounded in faith, morality, virtue, and service. For mentors and teachers to assume that faith is inherent would be a mistake. They must be aware of this vital part of their student’s education so faith in God will not be missing from future college graduates and statesmen.

Just as Plato understood that most people live life seeing mere shadows but believing them to be real objects, or as Paul wrote, seeing “through a glass, darkly,”^j Those who have been educated without a foundation in faith cannot see things for what they really are. Their vision is blurred: they will not become statesmen of the caliber of Washington or Jefferson

but will, as Lenin did, lead others down dangerous and destructive paths.

(Endnotes)

- a Franklin, Benjamin, *The writings of Benjamin Franklin*. Edited by Albert Henry Smyth. 10 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905-07; 10:84.
- b *The Roots of American Order*, p 466.
- c Huszar, George B. de; Littlefield, Henry W.; and Littlefield, Arthur W.; eds. *Basic American Documents*. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1953; pp. 108-9.
- d Carson, Clarence. *The American Tradition*. New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1970; p. 239.
- e *Ibid.* p. 242.
- f Skousen, W. Cleon. *The Naked Communist*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Ensign Publishing, 1961; p 350.
- g Kirk, Russell. *The Roots of American Order*, Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books. 2003; p 121.
- h Skousen, W. Cleon. *The Naked Communist*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Ensign Publishing, 1961; p 71.
- i Skousen, W. Cleon. *The Majesty of God's Laws*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Ensign Publishing, 1996; p 548.
- j 1 Corinthians 13:12.

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