

Loyalists And Their Loyalty To The Crown: Why Tories Sided With The British
William Heegaard
Sometime in High School

The American Revolution drastically split the people of the 13 colonies. Families separated and friends parted over the rationale of siding with Britain or the Revolutionists. Although the Patriots defeated Britain, and their opinions legislated, Loyalists during the revolution had many decent reasons for siding with King George. Many, if not most Tories during the American Revolution, took their position because of an ulterior motive or for personal gain, as opposed to their moral values. Whether they were aristocratic landowners wanting to keep their property, African Americans wanting to escape bondage, or Church members looking for financial support and tolerance, Tories during the war aligned with Britain for reasons other than loyalty to the Crown.

Wealthy landowners or property speculators had a lot of money and/or land at stake during the war. It is very possible that these aristocrats felt more financially secure with Britain in control of the Americas than with the Rebel leaders. Up to this time in history, Britain had granted many nobles and high class persons huge land lots in the Colonies, and it is conceivable that the landed gentry took this into consideration when deciding who to support. The Colonial

charters given to the Americas also helped convince the upper class that to side with the British would be the best decision financially. The Rebels demonstrated their lack of empathy for property owners by passing the Massachusetts Banishment Act in 1778, which "...kicked 48 wealthy landowners off their property." The Act was made to "...prevent the return to this state of certain persons therein named and others who have left this state or either of the United States, and joined the enemies thereof." This Act affected the economy, but more importantly swayed many aristocrats into backing the British. They didn't side with the king for moral reasons. Rather, risk of losing money and property by the actions of Patriots pushed them into supporting the Crown. African Americans had one very strong motive for joining British forces: freedom. "In November 1775, Lord Dunmore, the British colonial governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation that all slaves belonging to rebels would be received into the British forces and freed for their services." In his proclamation, Lord Dunmore announces that

I hereby further declare all indented servants, Negroes or others (appertaining to rebels) free, that are able to bear arms, joining His Majesty's Troops, as soon as may be, for more speedily reducing the colony to a proper sense of their unity, to this majesty's crown and dignity.

Many slaves pursued freedom and joined British lines, where they "...served as soldiers, servants, laborers and spies." Others created guerilla units of their own.

One example of these units is Colonel Tye and his raiders. His force of marauders plagued the country sides of New York and New Jersey, raiding plantations, capturing Patriot militia and freeing other slaves. A total of 100,000 African Americans escaped or died in battle during the Revolutionary War. These slaves did not join British ranks because of principles similar to the Crown. Instead, they enlisted to escape bondage.

During the 1700's, religion was a huge issue that helped sway many into backing the Crown of Great Britain. Many religious minorities believed, that Britain would provide superior religious tolerance, compared to the Revolutionists. This is demonstrated by the Quebec Act passed by the Parliament in 1774. The Act expanded territory in which the French Canadians could settle, provided religious tolerance for Roman Catholics, and allowed the practice of French civil law. The Quebec Act states "...That his Majesty's Subjects, professing the Religion of the Church of Rome of and in the said Province of Quebec. may have, hold, and enjoy, the free Exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome...." This Act clearly informs the Americas that Britain is giving persons land to exercise freedom from religious persecution.

Many members of the Anglican Church were also Tories. Clergymen of the church were paid by Britain, and backed the Crown because they wanted to keep their excellent financial position. Quakers, too, backed Britain, but for reasons other than money. Quakers wanted peace,

and many thought that Britain would end the war before the Revolutionists. In conclusion, the religious sects who sided with the British did not necessarily agree with the king's values, but aligned with the Crown for peace, money, or religious freedom.

Though most Tories sided with King George with ulterior motives in mind, some Loyalist felt some sort of personal or moral connection with Britain. Evidence for this connection comes from the fact that 80,000 people either fled or were kicked out of the Americas because they supported the King. Had the Tories only sided with Britain for property or financial support, they probably would not have risked losing either of these, plus their lives, by fleeing to Canada and staying loyal to the Crown. Also, families split and friends parted over the rationale for siding with the British or the American colonies. This shows that something more than property or money was at stake: moral values. The fact that Tories fled the country, and families separated to stay loyal to the king confirms that Loyalists stayed in allegiance to the Crown because of similar beliefs and values.

Although it might be true that values swayed some Loyalists into backing the Crown, research still confirms that most Tories had personal gain in mind. Many Loyalists felt more strongly about the war than the British, illustrating that Tories had reasons other than moral values for supporting Britain. This is proven by the fact that 50,000 Loyalists fought for the British Army in special regiments, despite British neglect. British military officials even

disrespected American Loyalist soldiers, and didn't treat them as equals. Still, the Tories fought for the Crown, demonstrating that they were not fighting for values, but instead for personal or financial gain.

Loyalists during the American Revolution had many reasons for backing Great Britain. The majority of these Tories supported King George for motives other than loyalty to the Crown. Whether they were African Americans who sided for freedom, aristocrats for property, or religious sects for tolerance and support, Loyalists sided with Britain for personal gain, not because of similar morals and beliefs.

Bibliography

Gordon S. Wood. 1992. *The Radicalism Of The American Revolution*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Inc. James L. Stokesbury. 1993. *A Short History Of The American Revolution*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Co. Barbara W. Tuchman. 1998. *The First Salute*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Inc. David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey. 2005. *The American Pageant, Advanced Placement Edition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co. Ed. William F. Maton. *Quebec Act (1774)*. Cited 10/08/05. As found at HYPERLINK "http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/PreConfederation/qa_1774.html" http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/PreConfederation/qa_1774.html. *The Revolutionary War – Africans in America – Part Two*. Cited 10/08/05. HYPERLINK "<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr4.html>" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr4.html>. *Massachusetts Banishment Act (1778)*. Cited 10/08/05. As found at HYPERLINK "<http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/halew/Mass-Banishment-Act.html>" <http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/halew/Mass-Banishment-Act.html>