

Central Bureau Publications
Historical Brochure No. III

Lenhart, John M.
Catholics and...
ABZ 1698 c.2.

457684

Catholics
and the
American Declaration
of Independence
(1774-1776)

By
REV. JOHN M. LENHART, O.M.Cap.
Pittsburgh, Pa.

CENTRAL BUREAU, C. C. V. OF A.
ST. LOUIS, MO.
1934

Central Bureau Publications
Historical Brochure No. III

Catholics
and the
American Declaration
of Independence
(1774-1776)

By
REV. JOHN M. LENHART, O.M.Cap.
Pittsburgh, Pa.

CENTRAL BUREAU, C. C. V. OF A.
ST. LOUIS, MO.

1934

The undersigned testifies that the pamphlet "Catholics and the American Declaration of Independence" does not contain anything against Faith and morals and hereby grants permission to have it printed.

Very Rev. Sigmund Cratz, O.M.Cap.,
Provincial

Pittsburgh, October 2, 1934.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Joannes Rothensteiner

Censor Librorum

Sti. Ludovici, die 26. Septembris, 1934

IMPRIMATUR

P. P. Crane, V.G.

Archidioecesis St. Ludovici

Sti. Ludovici, die 19a. Octobris, 1934

Catholics and the American Declaration of Independence

(1774-1776)

Widely divergent opinions regarding the attitude of the Catholic settlers of the English colonies of North America towards American Independence before and after the Declaration are found among the Catholic historians of this country. John Gilmary Shea wishes us to believe the Catholics living in the Thirteen Colonies had "spontaneously, universally and energetically given their adhesion to the cause of America and, when the time came, to American independence," that "there was no faltering, no division," that "every Catholic was a Whig" (supporter of the Americans), that "there were no Catholic Tories" (supporters of England)¹), and that "the Catholics were to a man, with their clergy, staunch and true [to the Americans] which can be said of none of the sects."²) Shea's views have been generally accepted by Catholic writers in this country and have been propagated in countless books and periodicals up to the present.

According to these Catholic historians every Catholic man and woman living in the Thirteen Colonies shared the view of their Protestant compatriots, that they were "entitled by the bounty of an indulgent Creator to freedom," joined them "in resolving to be free and in re-

¹) Catholics and Catholicity in the Days of the American Revolution, in: Proceedings of the U. S. Catholic Historical Society of New York, 1885, p. 20.

²) *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1876, p. 154.

jecting, with disdain, the fetters of slavery," were "determined to live free, or not at all, and resolved that posterity shall never reproach them with having brought slaves into the world," that "a licentious Ministry rioted in the ruins of the rights of mankind" and caused "unmerited and unparalleled oppressions."³⁾

Martin I. J. Griffin disproved Shea's assertion by pointing out that very many Catholics in the thirteen colonies fought on the British side or favored the British in other ways.⁴⁾ Such an attitude was most logical in view of the bitter hostility manifested by the American Patriots towards the Catholic religion.⁵⁾ Besides, universal espousal of the American cause was utterly impossible, as is proven by later history, since the Catholics of this country have never yet "been a unit, a solid body, on any public measure, even those directly concerning the Church."⁶⁾ Accordingly we must not be surprised at finding in the thirteen colonies a great number of Catholics who remained loyal to their king and country and did not heed Washington's invitation "to range under the standard of general liberty" and "to take up arms in defense of liberty, property, wives, and children"; who were not incited by the pleasing prospect of "the full enjoyment of the blessings

³⁾ Address of the Continental Congress to the Oppressed Inhabitants of Canada, May 29, 1775, in: *Journal of Congress*, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, pp. 100-102, and in the Library of Congress edition, vol. II, Washington, 1905, pp. 68-70.

⁴⁾ *Catholics and the American Revolution*, vol. I, Ridley Park, Pa., 1907, pp. 64, 131-132, 325-339, vol. II, Philadelphia, 1909, pp. 135-153, 161-184, 215.

⁵⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 1-33, 34-39, 129, 211-215, 242-245, 246-249, vol. II, pp. 98, 136, 160.

⁶⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 218.

of a free government"; who would not "bring forth into action sentiments of freedom",⁷⁾ nor "generously dare to participate with their fellow-subjects, in the sweets of that security which is the glorious lot of freedom."⁸⁾

A third opinion regarding the political attitude of Catholics of the thirteen colonies was set forth lately by Theodore Maynard. "The paradoxical position of the Catholics during the Revolution," he writes,⁹⁾ "can only be accounted for on the ground of the perception on the part of the Catholics that the political principles of the Declaration of Independence were in accordance with Catholic Philosophy." "American Catholics with few exceptions, not at the instigation of their clergy and not because of the compelling influence of their lay leaders, instinctively saw that the American cause was just, and that it was supported by Catholic teaching."¹⁰⁾

This view of Mr. Maynard is as little tenable as that of J. G. Shea. Mr. Griffin's opinion in this matter is alone correct; yet unfortunately he overlooks certain aspects which tend to qualify some of his sweeping statements. The part which the Catholics of Canada, Louisiana, and Europe played in the struggle for independence is so decisive that we need invent no gratuitous stories about the services of the

7) Address to the Inhabitants of Canada, issued by George Washington in September of 1775, quoted by Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 128-129, 274-275.

8) Address of the Provincial Congress at New York to the Inhabitants of the Province of Quebec, June 2, 1775, quoted by Griffin, op. cit., I, p. 130.

9) *The American Mercury*, March, 1933, New York, pp. 354-355.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 359.

Catholics in the thirteen colonies to the American cause.

We cannot obtain a true idea of the attitude of Catholics in the colonies towards American Independence without taking into consideration the animosity of the American Patriots against the Catholic religion. Mr. Griffin is particularly severe in his strictures upon the bigoted Americans and ascribes to anti-Catholic sentiments of the revolting colonists an influence which is not warranted by facts.

Did Bigotry Beget the American Revolution?

The political considerations set forth in the American Declaration of Independence have been usually accepted as explaining the origin and justifying the course of action of the American Revolution. Of late, however, Catholic historians like Cardinal Gasquet and Martin I. J. Griffin sought to prove that the American Revolt was caused by bigotry, stirred up by the passage of the Quebec Act by the British Parliament in May, 1774. By that act the British government extended the Province of Quebec to the banks of the Mississippi and the Ohio, so that it became conterminous in the West with the English colonies on the Atlantic ocean, restored the French civil laws and granted some sort of freedom of worship to the Catholics. The Americans regarded this as one of the "intolerable" acts whereby the "free Protestant colonies were hemmed in and Popery was established in the neighboring province of Canada."

Mr. Griffin marshals a long array of evidences of hostility displayed by the Americans against the Catholic religion during the initial

stages of the Revolution. This list could be greatly extended by adducing similar instances of outbursts of bigotry. We shall single out only the most striking cases of anti-Catholic hostility, furnished by the Continental Congress, the representative body of the revolting colonists.

On October 14, 1774, Congress resolved "that the act passed in the British Parliament for establishing the Roman Catholic religion, in the province of Quebec, abolishing the equitable system of English laws, and erecting a tyranny there, to the great danger [from so total a dissimilarity of religion, law and government] of the neighboring British colonies," is an "infringement and violation of the rights of the colonists" to which "Americans cannot submit."¹¹⁾

Six days later, October 20, Congress approved the Memorial to the People of Great Britain. This document was signed by the members, fifty-two in all, including George Washington. Congress says in this public appeal to the British people that "several oppressive acts have been passed by the British Parliament respecting the town of Boston and Massachusetts-Bay, and also an act for extending the province of Quebec, so as to border on the western frontiers of these colonies, establishing an arbitrary government therein, and by . . . the influence of civil principles and ancient prejudices, to dispose the inhabitants to act with hostility against the free Protestant colonies, whenever a wicked ministry shall chuse so to direct them."¹²⁾

11) Journal of Congress, vol. I., Phila., 1800, p. 30.

12) Ibid., p. 32.

Yet Congress went farther on the following day, October 21, in its Address to the People of Great Britain which was approved and signed on that day. "We think," this body addresses the British people, "the legislature of Great Britain is not authorized by the constitution, to establish a religion [i. e. the Catholic], fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets. . . . And by an other act the Dominion of Canada is to be extended, modelled, and governed, as that disunited from us, detached from our interests, by civil as well as religious prejudices, that by their numbers daily swelling with Catholic emigrants from Europe, and by their devotion to administration, so friendly to their religion, they might become formidable to us, and on occasion, be fit instruments, in the hands of power, to reduce the ancient free Protestant colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves. . . . Nor can we suppress our astonishment, that a British Parliament should ever consent to establish in that country [Canada], a religion that has deluged your island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder, and rebellion through every part of the world. . . . Admit that the Ministry by the power of Britain, and the aid of our Roman Catholic neighbor, should be able to carry the point of taxation, and reduce us to a state of perfect humiliation and slavery. . . . May not a Ministry with the same armies enslave you? . . . Remember the taxes from America, the wealth and, we may add, the men, and particularly the Roman Catholics of this vast continent, will then be in the power of your enemies."¹³⁾

¹³⁾ Ibid., pp. 37-42.

On the same day, October 21, Congress approved the Memorial to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies of North America, which again, but in milder terms, denounced the Quebec Act. "In Parliament," Congress tells the Loyalists of America, "an act was passed for changing the government of Quebec, by which the Roman Catholic religion, instead of being tolerated, as stipulated by the treaty of peace, is established . . . and the French laws are established in direct violation of his majesty's promise . . . and the limits of that province are extended so as to comprehend those vast regions, that lie adjoining to the northerly and westerly boundaries of these colonies. The authors of this arbitrary arrangement flatter themselves, that the inhabitants [of Canada], deprived of liberty, and artfully provoked against those of another religion, will be proper instruments for assisting in the oppression of such as differ from them in mode of government and faith . . . We cannot, upon a review of past events, be persuaded, that they [the people of England], the defenders of true religion, and the asserters of the rights of mankind, will take part against their affectionate Protestant brethren in the colonies."¹⁴) How egregiously Congress erred! Before a year had rolled by, the dreaded Catholic Canadians had resisted all attempts of the British government to use them as "fit instruments for oppressing their Protestant neighbors," and the Protestant "defenders of true religion and the asserters of the rights of mankind" had rallied to the British standard to "subject them to a despotic government."

¹⁴) Op. cit., pp. 50-52.

Finally on October 26, of the same year, Congress approved and signed the Address to the King, in which it again denounced the Quebec Act and reminded the king of his duty to uphold the Protestant religion of his ancestors. "In Parliament an act was passed," they write, "for extending the limits of Quebec, abolishing the English and restoring the French laws . . . and establishing an absolute government and the Roman Catholic religion throughout those vast regions, that border on the westerly and northerly boundaries of the free, Protestant English settlements . . . We ever enjoyed our right under the auspices of your royal ancestors whose family was seated on the British throne, to rescue and secure a pious and gallant nation from the popery and despotism of a superstitious and inexorable tyrant [the Catholic King James II. of England] . . . Permit us . . . to implore you, for the honor of Almighty God, whose pure religion our enemies are undermining . . . will not suffer the transcendent relation formed by these ties to be further violated."¹⁵) And the members of Congress, George Washington included, again put their names to this effusion of anti-Catholic bigotry. This is the last insult offered the Catholic religion by Congress. When this body next met, after an adjournment of seven months, on May 10th, 1775, things had taken a different turn than the leaders of the Revolt had expected: cooperation of Catholics was sought and bigotry repressed. When the Quebec Act was mentioned, we do not find Congress assailing establishment of popery in Canada but only the change of the form of government.

¹⁵) Op. cit., pp. 64-67.

The Continental Congress, although composed of men of worth, was swayed by anti-Catholic prejudices; even George Washington, the greatest of all the members, affixed his signature to those fierce attacks on the Catholic religion. If the leaders of the Revolt were so antagonistic to the Catholics, we cannot expect the rank and file to have been moderate. Indeed, two-thirds of all the books and pamphlets published during those years in the thirteen colonies are strongly anti-Catholic and the newspapers and periodicals no less so.

In view of this virulent hostility against the Catholic religion we may raise the question as to its influence upon the political development leading up to Independence. Mr. Griffin regards the fierce anti-Catholic hostility displayed by the American Patriots as "an active principle which brought on the Revolt and gave it force . . . The leaders (he writes) sought to impress upon the people that Protestantism had been assailed and might in America be overthrown . . . An active motive of the Americans in taking up arms against Great Britain was the belief of large and influential numbers that the Protestant Religion was being assailed and threatened with suppression, and that the fear of 'establishing Popery' in America was, after all, the incentive which made great numbers of the Colonists take up arms who could not have been moved to activity by recitals of oppressive tax laws, which affected not directly the great body of the people, though they may have those in the mercantile pursuits."¹⁶)

Griffin, however, goes farther. According to

¹⁶) Catholics and the American Revolution, vol. I, pp. 1-2.

him bigotry against the Catholics was not only one of many active causes, but the main and all-powerful cause, which brought on the Revolution. "The Quebec Act of 1774," he writes, "brought on the actual war: the fighting"; it was "the last straw" hastening the outbreak of the Revolution; "resistance to 'Popery' was the cementing sentiment, the actuating motive which largely filled the army during the early days of the Revolution."¹⁷⁾ He doubts "whether the oppressive laws alone would have moved the body of people to acts of resistance, had not Religion [bigotry] been a moving force upon the minds of the people."¹⁸⁾

The eminent historian clearly overstates the force of bigotry during the initial years of the struggle with England. A very large number of Americans were not moved by its outcries. John Adams states that one-third of the people living in the thirteen colonies remained staunch supporters of England or Loyalists throughout the Revolution;¹⁹⁾ their number amounted to about 1,300,000. Another third was made up of such whose allegiance was divided or who were neutral. Only one-third of the people were real supporters of the American cause. Accordingly the greater majority of the colonists were not affected by the anti-Catholic propaganda carried on by the revolting Patriots; loyalty to their king and government would not allow them to place bigotry above patriotism.

Griffin overlooks the fact that a large number of soldiers fighting in the ranks of the Amer-

17) *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6.

18) *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 1.

19) *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 165.

ican army were pressed into service against their will. A constant exchange of mutual recriminations was kept up between the Americans and the British authorities, that their friends were pressed into the enemy army. Some of these impressed men deserted, some were reconciled to their lot. Accordingly not every soldier shouldered his gun from patriotic motives: he knew he might be driven into the camp of men most hostile to his religion if he failed to render military service.

Moreover Mr. Griffin completely overlooks the powerful influence exerted by the Protestant churches on the revolutionary movement. True, the leaders of the Revolt were laymen. Yet it is certain that, but for the support of the churches, they would have been doomed to failure. The religious tenets of the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists were not only a moving force in stirring up the minds of their adherents to hostility against the Catholics, but at the same time also an active principle in bringing about the outbreak of the Revolution. "The dissenting clergy," writes Alice M. Baldwin,²⁰) "and especially the Puritan clergy of New England, were among the chief agitators of the Revolution and, after it began, among the most zealous and successful in keeping it alive." Moreover, they had formulated and spread the political doctrines of the Revolution. "There is not a right asserted in the Declaration of Independence," declares Miss Baldwin²¹), "which had not been discussed by the New England clergy before 1763." When

²⁰) The New England Clergy and the American Revolution, Durham, N. C., 1928, p. XI.

²¹) Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

the Stamp Act was passed (March, 1765) the Ministers of New England became the leaders in the Revolt and urged all the arguments which nine years later (1774-1776) were advanced against England and began to threaten a possible rupture with England and establishment of American Independence.²²⁾ If the Stamp Act had not been repealed (February, 1766), the rupture with the English Government would have been brought about just as well as ten years later. Accordingly it is a mistake to assert, as Mr. Griffin does, that "the Quebec Act of 1774 brought on the actual war" or that it was "the last straw." It was only a welcome means used by the leaders to gain their end; the Revolution would have been brought about eventually without its aid.

There is, however, a certain aspect of the Quebec Act which Mr. Griffin completely overlooked. True, the fierce attacks of Congress upon the Catholic religion previously referred to, were likewise outbursts of the bigotry and hostility of the rank and file. Yet we believe that the anti-Catholic propaganda would have been far less intense, had not the fear of "Prelacy" lent it added force. "The danger of the establishment of an Anglican Episcopate in America," writes Miss Baldwin²³⁾, "seems to have caused fear between 1763 and 1775 not only among the New England Ministers but also the laymen as well. John Adams says this apprehension of Episcopacy contributed as much as any other cause to arouse the attention, not only of the inquiring mind, but of the common people, and to urge them to close

²²⁾ Op. cit., pp. 90, 101.

²³⁾ Op. cit., p. 91.

thinking on the constitutional authority of parliament over the colonies." With the passing of the Quebec Act of 1774 the fear of an Anglican Episcopate and the possible loss of their own independence and prestige became more acute for the New England Ministers and their congregations.²⁴⁾ This fear accordingly was a very strong motive for the New England Ministers to denounce the Quebec Act. If the British Parliament had established an Anglican bishop at Halifax in 1774, the opposition of the Americans would not have been any less. When Richard Henry Lee of Virginia declared in October, 1774, that "of all the bad acts of Parliament the Quebec Act is the worst,"²⁵⁾ it is hard to determine which of the two was uppermost in his mind: fear of Popery or fear of Prelacy.

There is yet another aspect to be considered, which likewise extenuates to a certain extent the outbursts of bigotry against the Catholics. The Continental Congress acted as the spokesman of constitutional government and defended the old rights and privileges which seemed to be at stake. The acts of the British Parliament were regarded as violations of constitutional rights and the British government as revolutionary in its attempt to foist new and unwarranted acts upon the people. Therefore the Americans stoutly proclaimed from the beginning that their armed resistance was a constitutional resistance against unconstitutional acts of the British Parliament. The Americans first took up arms as British subjects to redress the wrongs inflicted by a legal, though an un-

²⁴⁾ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

²⁵⁾ Quoted by Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 14.

just government.²⁶⁾ No matter how kindly the American Patriots might have felt personally towards the Catholics, they felt bound as "free Protestant" British subjects to denounce an Act of Parliament which introduced a change in the constitutional status of Catholics. Accordingly Mr. Griffin errs in pressing the constitutional denunciations of the Catholic religion so as to make them expressions of the personal attitude of the signing members: they primarily disputed the right of the British Parliament to change the constitution and in doing so used language which had reverberated in the assembly room of that body for more than two centuries. Their mistake was: the British people and its government had changed and they would not recognize this fact.

Finally Mr. Griffin would have us believe the leaders of the American Revolution were bigoted for bigotry sake. The Americans, however, always displayed a shrewd business spirit. If the bigotry outcry would further their ends, they were not slow in making use of it. Studying the Addresses of the Continental Congress of 1774 closely, we find that the oppressive tax laws and the restrictions of the rights of the people are always placed in the foreground and the Quebec Act follows last or second last of all grievances. We are told time and again that the Americans were forced to take up arms to protect their property, their wives and their children. These were the considerations uppermost in their minds. From the very first settlement on Massachusetts-Bay business consider-

²⁶⁾ Vossler, Otto. *Die amerikanischen Revolutionsideale in ihrem Verhältnis zu den europäischen.* Munich, 1929, pp. 11-17, 18 note, 33 note.

ations weighed more heavily than bigotry against Catholics. As early as 1650 Governor Bradley wrote about the Puritan profiteers of Massachusetts-Bay: "The English merchants traded with the French [Catholics of Canada], both with provisions, powder and shott and so have continued to doe [from 1635] till this day [1650], as they have seen opportunitie for their profite. So as in truth the English themselves have been the cheefest supporters of the French . . . and it is no marvell they still grow and ineroach more and more upon the English."²⁷⁾ And the Americans of the Revolution were the same selfish business men. For this contention we have the testimony of George Washington himself. On November 28, 1775, Washington wrote to Joseph Reed: "Such a dearth of public spirit and such want of virtue, such stock jobbing and fertility in all the low arts to obtain advantages of one kind or another, I never saw and pray God I may never be witness to again . . . Could I have foreseen what I have and am like to experience, no consideration upon earth should have induced me to accept this command."²⁸⁾ Yet that commercial spirit did not disappear with Independence. The British Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe wrote from York on July 20, 1796, that "land jobbing prevailed in the United States from President Washington, now advertising his lands as the cream of the country, to the lowest adventurer."²⁹⁾ Griffin states correctly³⁰⁾

²⁷⁾ History of New England, in: Collect. Massachusetts Hist. Soc., vol. XXXIII, Boston, 1856, pp. 336-337.

²⁸⁾ Griffin, op. cit., II., pp. 243-244.

²⁹⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1891, Ottawa, 1892, p. 73. ³⁰⁾ Op. cit., I., p. 2.

that "the oppressive tax laws affected not directly the great body of the people," yet they were regarded as ever so many infringements upon the sacred rights of the colonists, and in that way "the cause of America was the cause of every virtuous American citizen."³¹)

In view of all these facts we must reject the sweeping statements of Mr. Griffin and his school, and in the interest of historic truth deny that anti-Catholic bigotry was the moving force which brought about the Revolution. Even if the British Parliament had never passed the Quebec Act, the commercial and Puritan interests would have been powerful enough to precipitate the American Revolution.

Attitude of the American Catholics Towards Independence

In view of the bitter anti-Catholic hostility of the revolting colonists during the early years of the Revolution we should reasonably expect that all Catholics would have opposed the Patriots. All the more, since their religion taught them that resistance to lawful authority is sinful and damnable. On the other hand, when we consider the political disabilities of Catholics in the British colonies, we should marvel to find Catholics supporting the British government. With the exception of Pennsylvania each state carried anti-Catholic laws on its statute-books. In Maryland, where two-thirds of the 22,000 Catholics in the colonies lived, a tax of \$100 per month was levied upon

³¹) Washington's Address to the Inhabitants of Canada, Sept. 1775, quoted by Griffin, op. cit., I., p. 128.

all who did not attend public worship on Sundays in the Episcopal churches.³²⁾

Placed into so anomalous a position, the Catholics of the American Colonies had no choice but either to resist the lawful authority, join the British forces, or to remain neutral. A number of Catholics, the clergy foremost, chose the latter course in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and the allegiance due their country. Even Father John Carroll, who accepted a commission from Congress in 1776, was very circumspect in showing his sympathy for the American Patriots. The rest of the American Catholics were divided, serving in both camps.

Maryland and Pennsylvania were the only colonies having a Catholic population. The others, with the exception of New York, had either no Catholics or only a few scattered families. The sum total of all Catholics was rather small, about 22,000 out of 3,500,000 to 4,000,000, i. e. not quite one percent of the entire population. Even if all Catholics had been staunch supporters of Independence, as Shea and his followers delight in telling us they were, the total number would have formed no more than two percent of the battling Americans. This goes to show that even the united adherence of Catholics in America to the patriotic cause would not have made a noticeable contribution to the final triumph.

Yet despite their small numbers the majority of Catholics in the British colonies south of the St. Lawrence River were in favor of the Revolution and later of Independence. The reason for this attitude is to be sought in the anti-

³²⁾ Griffin, op. cit., vol. II, p. 397.

Catholic laws of Maryland, which induced the Catholics of that colony to cast their lot with the revolting colonists. The Catholics of Maryland hoped Independence would bring about toleration of their religion, and they were not disappointed in their expectations. "When I signed the Declaration of Independence," said Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, "I had in view . . . the toleration of all sects professing the Christian Religion . . . Reflecting on the disabilities, I may truly say of the proscription of the Roman Catholics of Maryland . . . that I had much at heart this grand design, founded on mutual charity, the basis of our holy Religion."³³)

The Catholics of Maryland accordingly believed themselves justified in renouncing their allegiance to the British government in view of the existing penal laws directed against their religion, which in so shameful a manner outraged the sacred rights of freedom of worship. Besides, they feared that a victory of the British government over the revolting colonists would aggravate their condition still more. The Rev. Daniel Barber expressed well this dreadful apprehension haunting the minds of Catholics during the early years of the Revolution. "And now we find," he wrote, "the new England people and the Catholics of the Southern States fighting side by side, though stimulated by extreme different motives; the one acting through fear, lest the king of England should succeed in establishing among us the Catholic Religion; the other equally fearful, lest his bitterness against the Catholic faith should in-

³³) Quoted by Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 351, and vol. II, p. 396.

crease until they were either destroyed or driven to the mountains and waste places of the wilderness.”³⁴⁾ The Catholics of Maryland believed they were acting in self-defense: they took up arms not only in defense of their property, wives and children, like their Protestant compatriots, but also of what was dearer to them, their religion. In ranging themselves under the American standard they were animated more by religious motives than patriotic considerations in the same manner as all good Catholics of this country have always placed religion above patriotism.

Mr. Theodore Maynard would have us believe that the Maryland Catholics could not reasonably have expected to improve their condition by joining the Americans. In view of the bitter anti-Catholic hostility of the overwhelming majority of American Patriots he thinks that “to hope for anything from the new Republic they [the American Catholics] must have been either remarkably sanguine, or possessed of remarkable insight. A few did show great political sagacity; but for the rest the war could have been no more than a desperate gambler’s throw. There was not much that they could hope to win... The benefit they were to derive for their religion was extremely problematical... a mere guess that the United States would give them more religious liberty than England had accorded.”³⁵⁾ He thinks that if they had looked out for improvement of their political and religious condition they would have done better by remaining neutral. Yet the Rev. Daniel Barber, who lived through those stirring times, had

³⁴⁾ Quoted by Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 34.

³⁵⁾ *The American Mercury*, March, 1933, pp. 353-354.

a clearer insight into the souls of those Maryland Catholics battling for the Americans than the modern historian who wishes us to believe they had no weightier motive for espousing the American cause than the perception of agreement between the political principles of the Declaration of Independence and Catholic philosophy. The Maryland Catholics had everything to fear from a British victory and much to gain from American Independence. Perhaps they discerned a difference between the anti-Catholic bigotry of the Anglicans of Maryland, rooted in religious antipathy, and the hostility of the New England Patriots based on constitutional grounds. They were induced the more readily to cast their lot with the revolting Americans, when they saw how the latter were wearing out their Popish bigotry in the attempt to win over the Canadian Catholics; the solemn pledges made by the Continental Congress to the Canadian Catholics were ever so many pledges made to themselves, professing the same Faith as the Canadians. Therefore when they joined the ranks of the Americans their hope for betterment of their condition rested upon something more tangible than a sanguine expectation or a mere guess, and their espousal of the American cause was "more than a desperate gambler's throw." As a matter of fact, the once so violently anti-Catholic Patriots studiously avoided hurting the feelings of Catholics. On the British side it was otherwise. On August 3, 1777, the British general St. Leger issued a proclamation in which he denounced the Americans as having perpetrated "persecution and torture, unprecedented in the inquisitions of the Roman church"; and yet

numbers of Catholic soldiers were serving in his army.³⁶⁾ No American general would have dared to use such insulting language in 1777. The Americans had promised the Catholics freedom of worship, and eventually kept their promise.

The conditions, however, of the Catholics of Pennsylvania were different from those of Maryland. That colony was the only commonwealth which recognized, at least to a certain extent, the rights of Catholics by law. Probably the largest number of Loyalists lived in Pennsylvania, and this loyalist preponderance reacted powerfully upon the attitude of the Catholics of that state. Philadelphia had the largest Catholic population of all the cities in the thirteen colonies. Naturally Philadelphia was to a great extent loyalistic.

The Catholics of Pennsylvania were almost equally divided in their political affiliations, the number of Loyalists preponderating somewhat. Even families were divided, as for instance the Cauffman family of Philadelphia, whose son served in the American navy, while the father remained loyal to England.³⁷⁾ The Catholic Loyalists were sometimes of high rank or social standing. In a situation like this the Catholic clergy were forced to remain neutral, despite their personal sympathies. "There is no known record of their doing or saying anything in favor of the patriotic cause."³⁸⁾ Yet personally the Jesuits in Philadelphia and other places of Pennsylvania must have entertained sympathies for the Americans like their breth-

³⁶⁾ Quoted by Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 151.

³⁷⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 215-216.

³⁸⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 169.

ren, the Jesuits of Canada, who with their Indian charges favored the revolting colonists and assisted them in many ways, so that the British General Haldimand wrote on June 20, 1783, to Lord North: "The Jesuits have sided with the rebels."³⁹⁾

During the British occupation of Philadelphia the British succeeded in raising a regiment of Catholic Loyalists, which in May, 1778, counted 180 men. Another regiment of Volunteers of Ireland was formed in the same city about the same time, which numbered about 500 men, more than 380 of whom were deserters from Washington's army at Valley Forge. Naturally the majority of these Irish volunteers in British service were Catholics.⁴⁰⁾ Besides these soldiers a great number of prominent Catholics of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania were active in furthering the British cause.⁴¹⁾

The political division of the Catholics of Pennsylvania should not surprise us in the least. They had no compelling reasons, as had the Catholics of Maryland, for espousing the American cause; they were recognized by law and enjoyed a legal status, reason enough to remain loyal to England. They had been blessed with peace and liberty for many a year and were grateful to the British government which had granted them these privileges. When finally the revolting colonists began to revile their religion and attack their Faith in a vicious manner, such anti-Catholic hostility was not at all calculated to win them over to the

³⁹⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 142. ⁴⁰⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 325-352. ⁴¹⁾ See the long list in Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 170-182.

American side. Yet apart from this religious aspect, many Catholics were bound to the British cause by personal and social influences, subject to British officials or moved by motives of self-interest to side with England. Many were also kept loyal by their political belief or the teaching of their religion that resistance to lawful authority is sinful.

Reviewing the condition of the Catholics of Pennsylvania in its true light we must rather marvel that so many Catholics allied themselves with those who hated their religion and remained loyal to them despite ill usage at their hands and deep-seated bigotry. We can readily understand why so many Catholics of Pennsylvania continued in their adherence to England, but it is difficult to discover the reasons why, on the other hand, a great number supported the Americans. Some surely were pressed into service, and they can easily be excused. How the rest justified their disloyalty to lawful authority in the court of their private conscience remains largely a matter of conjecture. Certainly our hyper-patriotic histories would brand every Loyalist as meriting eternal execration and hold up every Patriot as worthy of all praise. Yet it is surely no disgrace but a glory that those Catholic Loyalists preferred to obey the lawful authority rather than the anti-Catholic "Rebels."⁴²)

The Catholics of Pennsylvania were surpassed in their loyalty to England by the Catholic Scotch Highlanders settled in the Mohawk Valley in Upper New York State. During the years 1773 to 1775 a large number of Scotch

⁴²) Compare Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 167-169, I, pp. 326-327, 330.

Highlanders came to America to make their abode in the section of undeveloped Western New York lying in Tryon County west of Albany. The greater number of these immigrants were Catholics, the rest Presbyterians. Yet, though divided in their Faith, they united against the revolting Americans despite the "No Popery" cry of the Patriots of New York. On May 18, 1776, the first exodus took place, when 130 Highlanders and 120 Loyalists of other nationalities left their homes to emigrate into Canada, where they settled and allied themselves with the British. The following year, early in May, 1777, another body of Catholic Highlanders departed to Canada, taking with them a number of Loyalist Germans from the Mohawk Valley.

These Catholic Highlanders remained faithful to England throughout. They resisted to the last man all endeavors of the Americans to win them over. They did not emigrate to Canada, as Shea and his disciples write, under pressure of the anti-Catholic bigotry of the Patriots of New York, but in order to avoid being dragooned by the Americans into service against England and to be able to fight on the British side. They rendered good service to England as soldiers of the British regiment of the Royal Greens. The Highlanders remaining in the Mohawk Valley after 1777 continued to refuse stoutly, as they had done before, to perform military duty for the Americans; they persistently remained neutral.

The reason for this unanimous loyalty to England was the oath these men had taken after the battle of Culloden, April 27, 1746, when 5,000 Highlanders were completely rout-

ed by 12,000 English soldiers. The Scotch Catholic Highlanders of New York acted in the same manner as did the Presbyterian Scotch Highlanders of North Carolina: they refused to violate an oath not to take up arms against the British government. Congress sent two Presbyterian ministers to win the Protestant Highlanders of North Carolina to the American cause; they assured them their oath was not binding because it was taken under compulsion. Yet all pleading, preaching and exhorting failed to move them. Not even the appeal to their anti-Catholic sentiments effected a change. No matter how confidently the ministers assured them the King had broken his coronation oath, had turned Roman Catholic, was intent upon establishing the Catholic religion throughout America and enslaving his Protestant subjects, the North Carolina Presbyterian Highlanders would not be swayed, but, as the "Regulators", rendered valuable services in the South to their conquerors and former enemies.⁴³)

The ten other colonies either had no Catholic inhabitants or so few as to form a negligible quantity. Yet beyond the frontiers of the thirteen colonies we find Catholic settlements in the Middle West which in 1763 had passed under British rule. The inhabitants of these places were French Canadians and, as a matter of course, in sympathy with the Americans. They were too far removed from the theatre of war to be affected by the struggle going on in the East. However, in 1778 George Rogers Clark set out from Louisville, Ky., to

⁴³) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 135-153; Shea, *Hist. of the Cath. Church in the U. S.*, vol. II. New York, 1888, pp. 76, 142-143.

conquer that vast country for the United States. The Catholic settlers of Vincennes, Ind., Kaskaskia, Ill., and Cahokia, Ill., surrendered voluntarily to the Americans. This occupation by an American force later proved very important, since it gave the United States a claim to the vast region stretching from the Alleghanies west to the Mississippi, and eventually the ratification of this claim in the treaty of peace of 1783.

The British post of Detroit, Mich., was chiefly settled by Catholic Canadians. In the Fall of 1776 these inhabitants stoutly refused to oppose the Americans and remained neutral in the conflict between the British and Americans for possession of the Northwest Territory.⁴⁴⁾ Detroit was captured in February 1779 by the Americans but they could not hold it. Throughout the Revolution Detroit was headquarters of the British forces in the Northwest, and the point from which many Indian expeditions were sent out to ravage the American settlements on the frontiers. A noted Loyalist of the Northwest was the Catholic Canadian Charles de Langlade of Green Bay, Wis., who took part in 99 battles and skirmishes against the Americans.⁴⁵⁾

In the extreme Southeast there were Catholic settlements in the town and district of Mobile, Ala. The settlers were French Creoles, who were too far removed from the battleground to be able to express effectively their sympathy for the Americans. British possession of this territory was never challenged during the Revolution. In British East and West

⁴⁴⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 184.

⁴⁵⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 64, vol. II, pp. 183-4.

Florida almost all Catholics had left the country when the British occupied these states in 1763.

As we observe from this survey, the Catholics living in the vast territory extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi and from the borders of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico were influenced by varied motives in their attitude for or against Independence. Religious, political and racial tendencies united various bodies of Catholics under the American flag while other considerations caused large bodies of Catholics to remain in the British camp. The French settlers of the West were more united in their sympathy towards the Americans than the English and German settlers of the East. Yet Mr. Maynard wishes us to believe that there was one uniformly compelling motive which induced the Catholics to join the American Patriots in a body, namely "the perception that the political principles of the Declaration of Independence were in accordance with Catholic Philosophy."⁴⁶) It is strange the Catholics themselves did not know of any such accordance. They were simple, law-abiding people with little or no education, who never pursued studies in political philosophy that might have qualified them to detect "the identity with their own of the principles of the Revolution."⁴⁷) Certainly there were "a few exceptions," declares Mr. Maynard, but almost all "instinctively saw that the American cause was supported by Catholic teaching."⁴⁸) Yet in the interest of historic truth

⁴⁶) *The American Mercury*, March 1933, New York, p. 355. ⁴⁷) Maynard, op. cit., p. 357.

⁴⁸) Maynard, op. cit., p. 359.

we must deny that those Catholics were endowed with such wonderful intuition. No contemporary document makes the faintest allusion to such philosophical perception. The Catholics joining the American ranks had other problems to solve. Their catechism taught them that lawful authority must be obeyed. Disloyalty to England was to each a personal case of conscience which had to be settled in conformity with the dictates of right reason. Accordingly resistance to England was to each Catholic who joined the Americans a serious matter, to be judged according to the teaching of Catholic moral theology and not of "Catholic philosophy."

Mr. Maynard's contention that the Catholics "as a body were for the American cause" and "did more than their share in the securing of American liberties"⁴⁹) is just as baseless as the still more exaggerated claims put forth by John Gilmary Shea.

Canadian Catholics and the Declaration of Independence

When the contest between the British government and the American colonies began to grow serious the leaders of the Revolt endeavored to enlist the sympathies of "all America" and the people of Great Britain in Europe. For that purpose the Continental Congress forwarded a Memorial and an Address to the people of Great Britain (October 20 and 21, 1774), a Memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies of America (October 21, 1774), a Letter to the colonies of St. John's

⁴⁹) Op. cit., pp. 354, 357.

(River), Nova Scotia, Georgia, East and West Florida (October 22, 1774), an Address to the inhabitants of Quebec (October 26, 1774), and lastly a Petition to King George III. (October 26, 1774). Hostilities finally commenced at Lexington, Mass., on April 18, 1775, and three weeks later, on May 10, 1775, the Continental Congress convened again after an adjournment of more than six months. Once more urgent appeals to the various parties were sent out by Congress, entreating them to "unite with the Americans in defense of common liberty." First came a Letter to the oppressed inhabitants of Canada (May 29, 1775), then an Address to the inhabitants of Great Britain (June 27, 1775), an Address to the people of Ireland, a Letter to the inhabitants of Jamaica, an Address to the people of Nova Scotia, and a second Petition to the King.

Yet the "free Protestant colonies," as the revolting Americans delighted to call themselves, were not accorded a response from the other Protestant colonies of British America and the Protestant people of England. The expected union of "all America" and the English people against the "wicked British Ministry" would not materialize. Nova Scotia, the nearest Protestant colony, opened her ports to welcome the ships carrying the families of Loyalists who left the Thirteen Colonies to settle in that British territory. When the resolutions of the Continental Congress and its Addresses were presented to the legislature of Nova Scotia, nobody paid attention to them. As early as October 17, 1775, two regiments were raised in Nova Scotia to fight the Americans, and various societies of Loyalists formed to aid

the British government.⁵⁰⁾ When in 1777 the Scotch Presbyterian Colonel John Allan, with the Catholic Indians of Maine and New Brunswick, invaded Nova Scotia to conquer it for the Americans, only five hundred men were needed to secure the conquest, but these men were not forthcoming; the inhabitants had invited and urged them to attempt the invasion, but at the critical time they would not come to their aid. If the American invaders could have held Nova Scotia in 1777, a new state would have been formed, which would have comprised the extensive territory now covered by the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, and as a result all Eastern Canada would now be part of the United States.⁵¹⁾ We have seen that more than a million Protestant inhabitants of the Thirteen Colonies refused to side with the Americans and even stoutly opposed them. Jamaica, the southernmost colony, refused to go further than to write an anti-Catholic Memorial to the British government.⁵²⁾ The Protestant people of England turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of their Protestant brethren across the ocean. Thus the "free Protestant colonies" of America did not receive any encouragement from their coreligionists but met everywhere with indifference or hostility. Whatever response they received came from Catholics: Canadians, Indians and Irishmen. Naturally this outcome speedily disabused the leaders of the Revolt of

⁵⁰⁾ Report on the Canadian Archives for the year 1894, Ottawa, Ont., pp. 356, 357, 359, 368, 369.

⁵¹⁾ Kidder, Frederic. *Revolutionary Operations in Maine and Nova Scotia*, Albany, 1867, p. 82, quoted by Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II; p. 126.

⁵²⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 24.

their bigotry. It was the first time that raising the howl of "No-Popery" was found to have done more harm than good to the "free Protestant" colonists. Naturally the cry died down and the wooing of the "image-worshipping" Papists quietly set in.

The Catholic settlers of Canada had been a source of disquiet and alarm to the English colonists south of the St. Lawrence River from the very first years of their establishment in that northern region. As early as 1613 they rushed to Canada to destroy the feeble settlements of the Catholic Frenchmen. They would not rest till all of Canada was conquered in 1760. Congress states in its resolutions of October 14, 1774, that "by the assistance of blood and treasure of the British colonies Canada was conquered from France,"⁵³) and in its Memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies of October 21, 1774, boasts "that the colonies were established and generally defended themselves without the least assistance from Great Britain."⁵⁴) Hence the bitterness of heart when they observed a friendly attitude on the part of the government towards those Catholics. All their sacrifices in lives and money seemed wasted; for over a century they had been scheming, using fair means and foul, to exterminate Popery or at least to check it, and in the end found that the government attempted to "establish Popery" by law where it hitherto had only tolerated that religion. As usual in heated disputes, one side of the contestants was laboring under a gross misconception. The Quebec Act did not grant more than

⁵³) Journal of Congress, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, p. 30. ⁵⁴) Ibid., p. 48.

the right to tithes and restoration of the French laws. This was very little indeed, and, as later events proved, the Church was obliged to fight for many decades to secure a firm legal status and some sort of "Establishment by Law."

Yet the revolting colonists had their own interpretation of the Quebec Act; they believed the King and the government had established Popery in Canada to secure the co-operation of the Canadian Catholics for the purpose of over-awing and oppressing the discontented English colonies. Congress gave expression to this fear that, "by the influence of civil principles and ancient prejudices, the inhabitants" of Canada would be "disposed to act with hostility against the free Protestant colonies, whenever a wicked ministry shall chuse so to direct them"⁵⁵); that "by being disunited from us (Americans), detached from our interests, by civil as well as religious prejudices, that by their (Canadians) numbers daily swelling with Catholic emigrants from Europe, and by their devotion to administration, so friendly to their religion, they (Canadians) might become formidable to us, and on occasion, be fit instruments, in the hands of power, to reduce the ancient, free Protestant colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves; . . . and being extremely dangerous to our liberty and quiet, we cannot forbear complaining of it, as hostile to British America"⁵⁶); that "the inhabitants (of Canada), deprived of liberty, and artfully

⁵⁵) Memorial to the People of Great Britain, October 20, 1774, in: Journal, vol. I, Philadelphia 1800, p. 32.

⁵⁶) Address to the People of Great Britain, October 21, 1774, in: Journal, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, p. 41.

provoked against those of another religion, will be proper instruments for assisting in the oppression of such as differ from them in modes of government and faith."⁵⁷) Laboring under that fear, Congress appealed to the Catholic Canadians, "not to suffer yourselves to be inveigled or intimidated by infamous ministers, so far as to become the instruments of their cruelty and despotism."⁵⁸)

Yet these fears of the Americans eventually proved groundless; the Catholic Canadians resisted all attempts of the British government "to inveigle them so far as to become instruments" "in the hands of power to reduce the free Protestant colonies to a state of slavery," while the Protestant countrymen of the British colonies of North America, of whom it was believed "that they, the defenders of true religion, and the asserters of the rights of mankind, will not take part against their affectionate Protestant brethren in the colonies,"⁵⁹) became fit instruments "to act with hostility" against them.

Canada, or rather the Province of Quebec, in 1774, when the struggle with England began, had a population of 150,000 inhabitants, all of whom were Catholics with the exception of 360 Anglicans. As early as October 26, 1774, Congress invited the Catholic Canadians "to unite with us in one social compact and

57) Memorial to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies, October 21, 1774, in: Journal, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, p. 51.

58) Address to the Inhabitants of Quebec, October 26, 1774, in: Journal, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, p. 61.

59) Memorial to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies, Oct. 21, 1774, op. cit., p. 52

send delegates to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia.”⁶⁰) The Canadians showed much sympathy with the Americans already at that time, although the invitation referred to, to send delegates, was not acted upon. When, early in 1775, a breach with England seemed inevitable, the leaders of the Revolt sent John Brown to Canada to ascertain the sentiment of the Canadians regarding the American cause and to establish a reliable channel of correspondence with the friends of the Americans in that country. Brown set out in February 1775 and reported from Montreal on March 29, 1775, advising the capture of Ticonderoga. On April 8th following, his friends wrote from Montreal that “the bulk of the people wish your (American) cause well but dare not stir a finger to help you They may mutter and swear, but must obey.”⁶¹) On May 18, 1775, Brown was in Philadelphia to report to the Continental Congress “that a design is formed by the British Ministry of making a cruel invasion, from the Province of Quebec, upon these colonies, for the purpose of destroying our lives and liberties, and some steps have actually been taken to carry the said design into execution.”⁶²)

To thwart these evil designs of the government, Congress on May 29, 1775, issued a Letter to the Oppressed Inhabitants of Canada, inviting them again “to join with us in resolving to be free, and in rejecting the fetters of slavery,” and “uniting with us in the defense of our

⁶⁰) Address to the Inhabitants of Quebec, Oct. 26, 1774, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶¹) Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 41, 69.

⁶²) Journal of Congress, vol. II, Washington, 1905, p. 56.

common liberty.”⁶³) Congress continues in the same letter: “We are informed you have already been called upon to waste your lives in a contest with us.... We can never believe that the present race of Canadians are so degenerated as to possess neither the spirit, the gallantry, nor the courage of their ancestors.... We, for our part, are determined to live free, or not at all.”⁶⁴)

Yet despite the assurance of Congress given to the Canadians in the letter of May 29, 1775, “that these colonies will pursue no measures whatever, but such as friendship and a regard for our mutual safety and interest may suggest,” the Americans endeavored to intimidate the Canadians. As early as April 6, 1775, the General and Governor of Canada reported from Quebec to Minister Dartmouth in London, “deputies from Massachusetts threaten that if the Canadians do not join them, 50,000 men from New England will lay waste Canada with fire and sword.”⁶⁵) To check these threats of violence Congress deemed it expedient under the circumstances to issue a disclaimer, and accordingly, on June 1, 1775, resolved “that no expedition or excursion ought to be undertaken or made, by any colony, or body of colonies, against or into Canada, that the above resolve be translated into the French language, and transmitted to the inhabitants of Canada.”⁶⁶) However, a violent proclamation of Governor

⁶³) Journal of Congress, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, pp. 100-102; vol. II, Washington, 1905, pp. 68-70.

⁶⁴) Journal, vol. I, p. 101; vol. II, Washington, 1905, p. 69.

⁶⁵) Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, Ottawa, p. 58.

⁶⁶) Journal, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1800, p. 104.

Carleton of Canada, denouncing the Americans as traitors and inciting the Canadian Indians against them, changed the mind of the members of Congress and led to the adoption of aggressive measures.

Preliminary to an invasion of Canada Congress issued a Declaration on July 6, 1775, setting forth that they had "received certain intelligence that General Carleton is instigating the people and the Indians to fall upon us." Then John Brown was sent with four men into Canada to obtain intelligence in regard to the military preparations made there by the British and the feelings of the people towards the Americans. From July 24 to August 10, 1775, Brown scouted in Canada, found the people favorably affected towards the Americans, and was assured by them that it was their wish to see an American army take possession of Canada, and that they would supply it with everything in their power, as soon as it came. The Catholic Indians expressed the same determination. The British army at that time had no more than about 700 soldiers in Canada, of whom nearly 300 were stationed at St. John's, New Brunswick, about 50 at Quebec, while the rest were scattered at different posts. Accordingly everything seemed favorable for the contemplated invasion. John Brown counselled immediate advance.

The American army began the advance from Ticonderoga under General Montgomery. On September 15, 1775, a detachment of 134 men crossed the border with letters to the Canadians, informing them that the invading army had no other design than to capture the British garrisons; their country, their liberties

and religion would not be touched. The invading army consisted of about 1100 men. St. John's was first taken on November 3, 1775, and ten days later Montreal surrendered. By November 18, 1775, Quebec was besieged and the whole Province of Canada was in the hands of the Americans with the exception of the lone city of Quebec. Seven months later the invading army was back in the States and all Canada was lost.

The rapid advance into Canada was only possible because of the cooperation of the Canadian people. The information given by John Brown was found to be correct. Three months before the American invasion, on June 7, 1775, General Carleton wrote from Quebec to Minister Dartmouth: "Within the last few days the Canadians and Indians are returning to their senses; the gentry and clergy have been very useful, but both have lost much of their influence."⁶⁷) This conversion of the Canadian peasantry to the British cause was the effect of Bishop Briand's mandate issued in favor of the British government on May 22, 1775.

Yet this loyal sentiment was not to last long. The British general Thomas Gage reported from Boston on August 20, 1775: "I hear from General Carleton that the Canadians are not so ready for war as we hoped, and some of the Indian tribes in that country copy them. The Canadians have enjoyed too much quiet and good living since under our Government, and much pains too have been taken both to terrify them and poison their minds."⁶⁸) Yet the Ca-

⁶⁷) Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, Ottawa, p. 60.

⁶⁸) Report of Canadian Archives for 1904, Ottawa, p. 358.

nadians had such powerful motives for siding with the Americans that the latter could have easily spared their pains in endeavoring to terrify them and poison their minds.

When the Americans finally invaded Canada in September 1775, the great body of the Canadians, the clergy and gentry and part of the burghers alone excepted, welcomed the invading army, aided them by the ready sale of supplies, cooperated in various other ways and finally joined their ranks. The British official Cramahé reported from Quebec on September 21, 1775, to Dartmouth: "All means have failed to bring the Canadian peasantry to a sense of duty. The gentry, clergy and most of the Bourgeoisie have shown the greatest zeal and have exerted themselves to reclaim their infatuated countrymen," but without any success.⁶⁹⁾ Three weeks later, on October 12, 1775, Guy Johnson, British Indian agent, wrote from Montreal to Dartmouth: "On the 6th of September the Rebel army attacked St. John's and were repulsed by the Indians. This was the critical time for striking such a blow as would have freed the country of these invaders and greatly contributed to assist General Gage's operations, but such was the infatuation of the Canadians that they could not with all General Governor Carleton's endeavors be prevailed upon, even to defend their country The Americans scattered their parties through the country, some of whom came within sight of Montreal, to draw in the Canadians to join them, and numbers did so."⁷⁰⁾ Another

⁶⁹⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, Ottawa, p. 63.

⁷⁰⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1904, p. 346.

British report of the same date said: "The Rebels overran all the country and were in many places joined by the perfidious Canadians. From September 27, 1775, to October 12, 1775, every art and means was made to assemble the Canadians and several came in, were clothed and armed and afterwards joined the enemy."⁷¹⁾ On November 20, 1775, Lt. Col. Allan McLean wrote from besieged Quebec to London: "What contributed most to the loss of the Country, the Town of Quebec being at this moment the only spot of it that remains subject to His Majesty's obedience, is the treachery and villany of the Canadians, for it is a certain fact that 2,000 of those fellows never could have done us any mischief, had they not been joined by the Canadians."⁷²⁾ At this juncture the fears of William Howe, expressed in a letter addressed from Boston to the British Secretary of State on December 3, 1775, were well grounded: "There is so much reason to fear that, by a general defection of the Canadians, the whole Province of Quebec will fall into the hands of the Rebels."⁷³⁾

The invading American soldiers were treated most hospitably by the Canadian peasants. "The urbanity of the peasants," wrote Major Henry Livingston, of the Third New York Regiment, "is very singular. The meanest of our soldiers that entered one of the houses of the village of Laprairie, October 19, 1775, was instantly regaled with a large bowl of bread and milk or any other eatables their houses afforded, and although our soldiers seldom made

⁷¹⁾ Ibid., p. 351.

⁷²⁾ Ibid., pp. 385-386.

⁷³⁾ Ibid., p. 355.

them any gratuities, their kindness was still unremitted.”⁷⁴⁾ Another soldier wrote from the same place on November 3, 1775: “More hospitable people I never saw; you cannot enter into a peasant’s house at any time of day but they set a loaf of bread and a pan of milk before you.”⁷⁵⁾ Before the invasion over 300 Canadians had joined the ranks of the American army in New York State, and during the invasion aided greatly in the capture of points along the St. Lawrence River. Nearly 500 other Canadians were enlisted in the country. More than 200 Canadian soldiers withdrew with the Americans on June 17, 1776, doing service in the American army during the remainder of the war.⁷⁶⁾ These Catholic Canadians were the first foreign soldiers in the American army.

The feeling of good will evidenced by these facts was destroyed within a short time by the conduct of the Americans and above all by the failure of their expedition. The causes which brought about this change are described by the American Colonel Moses Hazen in a letter written from Canada to General Schuyler on April 1, 1776. “You are not unacquainted with the friendly disposition of the Canadians when General Montgomery first penetrated into the country,” he wrote. “The ready assistance which they gave on all occasions, by men, carriages and provisions, was most remarkable But his unfortunate fate [he was killed in the assault on Quebec on December 31, 1775], added to other incidents, has caused such a change

⁷⁴⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 110-111.

⁷⁵⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 112.

⁷⁶⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 114-126.

in their disposition that we are no more to look upon them as friends . . . I think the clergy have been neglected, perhaps in some instances ill used. Be that as it may, they are unanimously against our cause, and I have too much reason to fear . . . are now plotting our destruction. The peasantry in general have been ill used. They have, in some instances, been dragooned, at the point of the bayonet, to furnish wood for the garrison at lower rates than the current price, also carriages and many other articles thus furnished. Certificates given were not legible, with only half a signature and of consequence rejected by the quarter master general . . . and in a more material point, they have not seen a sufficient force in the country to protect them."⁷⁷) General Schuyler wrote to Washington from Fort George on April 27, 1776: "The licentiousness of our troops both in Canada and in this quarter is not easily to be described nor have all my efforts been able to put a stop to the scandalous extremes."⁷⁸)

While the American campaign in Canada took such an adverse turn, Congress determined to retrieve the precarious situation by sending a diplomatic mission into that country. On February 15, 1776, Congress resolved to send three commissioners to Canada and elected as one of them the Catholic gentleman Charles Carroll of Carrollton, although the latter was not then a member of Congress. Up to that time the leaders of the Revolt had completely ignored the Catholics living in the colonies; they were numerically and socially so insignificant that the Americans could well afford to over-

⁷⁷) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 119-120, 221, 222.

⁷⁸) L. c. p. 120.

look them; the Revolution was a Protestant movement and the Catholics were not wanted. Therefore the Address of Congress to the inhabitants of the British colonies, issued on October 21, 1774, is directed to "the defenders of true religion" and designed to persuade them not to "take part against their affectionate Protestant brethren." However, in view of the distress of the American soldiers in Canada, Congress thought its Catholic countrymen might be of service also. And for this reason Congress selected a Catholic to go to Canada with two Protestants to endeavor to secure the assistance of the Catholic Canadians.

Congress did even more; it requested Charles Carroll to induce a Catholic priest to accompany the commissioners. Our Catholic historians are at a loss to explain this seemingly strange request; they surmise that Father John Carroll's services were requested to "help win the clergy and people."⁷⁹) If that had been the intention of Congress, Father Carroll would have been appointed commissioner as were the other three gentlemen. The mission of Father Carroll was not of a diplomatic but a priestly nature; since the Canadian priests refused to administer the sacraments to the supporters of the Americans, Father Carroll was expected to minister to them. John Adams wrote to James Warren on February 18, 1776: "Franklin, Chase and Carroll are chosen a committee to go to Canada. We have empowered the committee to take with them John Carroll, a Roman Catholic Priest and a Jesuit. This gentleman will administer Baptism to the Canadian

⁷⁹) L. c. pp. 104, 243, 254.

children and bestow absolution on such as have been refused it by the torified Priests of Canada. The anathemas of the Church, so terrible to the Canadians, having had a disagreeable effect upon them."⁸⁰⁾

The Commissioners left New York April 2, 1776, arrived at Montreal on the 29th of April, and were back in New York on the 27th of May, of the same year. They achieved nothing. Congress had empowered them to declare that the Americans would guarantee the Canadians fullest liberty in the exercise of their Catholic religion, a liberty which England then withheld from them, and would exempt them from the payment of tithes.⁸¹⁾ This last concession was a good argument to win the Canadian peasants, but a strong motive for the clergy to reject the American proposals; it was just this privilege to levy tithes which was influential in binding the clergy to the British cause.

Father John Carroll apparently did not exercise any priestly functions in Canada, but his friend, the Canadian Jesuit Father Pierre René Floquet, heard the confessions of the Canadian soldiers who served in the American army. The commissioners reported to Congress on the deplorable condition of the American army in Canada, that "our enemies take advantage of their distress, to make us look contemptible in the eyes of the Canadians, who have been provoked by the violence of our military in exacting provisions and services from them without pay. A conduct towards a people who suffered

⁸⁰⁾ Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. LXXII, Boston 1917, pp. 206-207.

⁸¹⁾ Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 267.

us to enter their country as friends, that the more urgent necessity can scarce excuse, since it has contributed much to the change in their good disposition towards us into enmity and makes them wish our departure.”⁸²⁾ And depart the American soldiers did shortly after; by June 17, 1776, Canada was rid of the invading army.

*Why Was Canada Lost to the Americans
in 1776?*

The Catholic peasants of Canada, as a body, were undoubtedly favorably disposed towards the American cause and made many sacrifices and endured great hardships to win independence for themselves and the Americans. Yet eventually all was lost. We may well ask, what brought about this great failure?

John Gilmary Shea and a host of Catholic historians would have us believe the anti-Catholic utterances of the Continental Congress must be blamed for that result. That when the Address of Congress to the People of Great Britain was read to the people of Canada, the Catholics of that country were horrified by the denunciation of their religion as one “fraught with impiety, rebellion and murder in every part of the world;” that they then turned against the American cause and Canada was lost in consequence.⁸³⁾ The conflicting addresses of Congress composed between the 21st and 26th of October, 1774, some denouncing the Catholic religion and others praising the Canadian Catholics, “had the effect of keeping the Canadians from joining in the Revolution. Be-

⁸²⁾ Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 120-121.

⁸³⁾ Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 101, 217, 112-113.

ing Catholics almost to a man, they were not going to risk their newly found religious freedom by throwing in their lot with the Americans in a war not of their own making. It was this justifiable distrust of the Colonials which kept them loyal to a crown for which they had no enthusiasm."⁸⁴)

Every sentence is an error. It is strange indeed that only the Canadian Catholics should have been affected by the outbursts of bigotry referred to, while in the Thirteen Colonies, according to Shea and his followers, every Catholic was "irresistibly a battler for American liberty," despite the greatest hostility displayed against their religion. It is likewise strange that, according to Mr. Maynard, the Catholics in the Thirteen Colonies "instinctively saw that the American cause was just and was supported by Catholic teaching," while the Canadian Catholics had not such a deep insight and refrained from joining their American brethren in the Faith in the battle for liberty. And the "newly found religious freedom" of the Canadians did not even exist on paper, still less in reality. Canada was not lost, as Shea tells us, by the bigotry of John Jay, displayed when he wrote the Address to the People of Great Britain; the howls of bigotry had as little influence in turning the Canadian peasants against the Americans as in causing the Catholics of Maryland to oppose their battling countrymen. Canada was not lost, as Mr. Maynard wants us to believe, "on the day when the Address to the People of Great Britain was composed,"⁸⁵) because, despite all outbursts of

⁸⁴) Maynard, Th., in *The American Mercury*, l. c., p. 358. ⁸⁵) Maynard, *ibid.*

bigotry, the bulk of the Canadians aided vigorously to help win Canada for the bigoted Americans. No, bigotry did not lose Canada to the Americans; nor did it drive the loyal Scotch Highlanders to Canada, nor yet did it cause the Revolutionary War. There were other causes at work in all these events.

Martin I. J. Griffin believes the loss of Canada in 1776 must be ascribed to several causes. First, he says, "with the Quebec Act passed, Canada had no cause to revolt. They had not been oppressed by England. . . . But above all stands the potent and impressive fact that Canada had no just cause to enter upon a Revolution or to aid or assist Rebellion. . . . The historical truth is that Canada had no real cause for revolt."⁸⁶) The modern historian expresses only the sentiment of Bishop Briand of Quebec, who declares in his mandate of May 22, 1775: "The singular kindness of King George exhibited to us as long as we are his subjects and his recent favor [Quebec Act] according to us our French laws, free exercise of religion, and full rights of British subjects, should be sufficient reason for showing your gratitude and zeal in defending the interests of the British government."⁸⁷) And long before the passage of the Quebec Act, in 1768, Bishop Briand had written: "We have all liberty."⁸⁸) Yet that liberty rested only on the good-will of the British officials in Canada. By the treaty of Paris (February 10, 1763) the Church in Canada was granted freedom of worship, as far as the laws

⁸⁶) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 103, 218-219.

⁸⁷) Gosselin, Auguste. *L'Église du Canada d'après la Conquête*, vol. II, Quebec, 1917, p. 3.

⁸⁸) *Ibid.*, vol. I, Quebec, 1916, p. 220.

of Great Britain allowed. Since, however, the laws of Great Britain did not permit public exercise of the Catholic Religion, the Church of Canada was not in reality granted freedom of worship by law; the clause nullified any concession made to her. Yet the Canadians did not care whether the government allowed concessions to the Church or not; they remained very indifferent regarding the situation.⁸⁹⁾

Governor Carleton returned to Canada in 1774, bearing with him the Quebec Act and Instructions. The Act was a real concession made to the Church in Canada, the first ever granted by the British government; it restored the French civil laws, along with the right to tithes. The Instructions of January 3, 1775, directed Governor Carleton not to forget that "the free exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome is only a toleration, that all appeals to or correspondence with any foreign ecclesiastical jurisdiction be absolutely forbidden, that no Episcopal or Vicarial Powers be exercised within Canada by any Person professing the Religion of the Church of Rome, but such only, as are essentially necessary to the free exercise of the Romish Religion, and in those cases not without a License and permission from the British Governor; that no person professing the Religion of the Church of Rome be allowed to fill any ecclesiastical Benefice, nor be appointed Incumbent of any Parish, in which the Majority of the Inhabitants shall solicit the appointment of a Protestant Minister; that the Society of Jesus be suppressed, and the admission of new Members into the Religious Communities of

⁸⁹⁾ Ibid., vol. I, Quebec, 1916, pp. 61-63.

men is not allowed without express orders of the King; that all Missionaries among the Indians be withdrawn and Protestant Ministers appointed in their places." 54 Indian tribes were specified, who were to be provided with Protestant missionaries, including the Catholic tribes of Penobscots, St. John River Indians, Micmacs, Abenakis, and Algonkins. These instructions were repeated without change on April 15, 1778, and August 23, 1786.⁹⁰⁾ And Bishop Briand extolled "the singular Kindness of King George" who throttled the Church of Canada legally and withdrew in one sentence what he granted in another.

If Bishop Briand had no complaints against the British, there were others who had. There were Jesuits in Canada whose Society had been suppressed and whose property was to be confiscated by the British government. Naturally they sided with the Americans who seemed to them sincere in their promises of complete liberty. Accordingly they and the Catholic Indians under their charge aided the fighting colonists, so that Governor Haldimand complained on June 20, 1783, "the Jesuits sided with the rebels."⁹¹⁾ There were also Recollects in the country, who were forbidden to receive new members. Naturally they espoused the American cause.⁹²⁾ Then too, Catholic Indians were numerous, some of whom were to be deprived of priests; they also favored the Americans, contrary to the express command of their Bishop. Moreover, there were more than 100,-

⁹⁰⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1904, pp. 229-274.

⁹¹⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 142.

⁹²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

000 peasants who hated Governor Carleton and the Quebec Act, so well liked by the clergy.

The Continental Congress, viewing the religious situation in Canada from the constitutional angle, pointed out the hollowness of the British pretensions. "What is offered to you by the late Act of Parliament?", Congress declared in its Address to the Inhabitants of Quebec on October 26, 1774: "Liberty of conscience in your religion? No." It is only "the precarious tenure of mere will, by which you hold your lives and religion." And in its Address to the Oppressed Inhabitants of Canada of May 29, 1775, Congress remarks rightly: "By the introduction of your present form of government [by your newly restored French laws] you and your wives and your children are made slaves. Nay, the enjoyment of your very religion, on the present system, depends on a legislature in which you have no share, [because only Protestants were to sit in it], and over which you have no control, and your priests are exposed to expulsion, banishment, and ruin, whenever their wealth and possessions furnish sufficient temptation"⁹³) (as in the case of the Jesuits). As far as the Church was concerned, she enjoyed only, as Congress so well expressed it, "the precarious tenure of mere will," no matter how well Bishop Briand was, at the time, satisfied with her hazardous status, and regardless of how content Canadian historians may still be with her condition during that period. Actually, England had denied freedom of worship just as definitely to the Canadians as to the Catholics of the home country. If Canada had joined the Colo-

⁹³) Journal, vol. I, pp. 58, 101.

nists, as she was requested to do by Congress in 1774, the Canadians would have obtained religious liberty in 1783.

For more than two years agents of the Americans went from house to house in Canada distributing copies of a French translation of the Addresses of Congress to the people. At the same time the Loyalists flooded the country with French translations of the Address of Congress to the People of Great Britain to show the duplicity of Congress.⁹⁴⁾ As a matter of fact neither the one nor the other made a profound impression upon the Canadian peasants: they had more powerful reasons to enlist them on the side of the revolting Americans.

Mr. Griffin advances as the second reason for the loss of Canada in 1776 that Bishop Briand of Quebec preserved the people in their loyalty to England. "The main cause, the great reason why Canada did not join in the Revolution," he writes, "was that Bishop Briand was loyal to England. He had to be. Duty required it. England would soon have throttled Bishop Briand, if he had shown countenance to the Americans or did not punish his priests and people who aided or favored them."⁹⁵⁾ He develops this contention in two long chapters.⁹⁶⁾ It is true, as Griffin states, that "allegiance was due to England,"⁹⁷⁾ but that does not say that Briand was right in forcing priests and people to support that country; he could have done what

⁹⁴⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 23, 263; Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 10.

⁹⁵⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 219.

⁹⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-103, 216-222.

⁹⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

the Jesuits in Pennsylvania and many bishops and popes did in other countries and ages—he might have remained neutral. The “priests kept the people obedient to authority,” but they were by no means obliged to act as British spies during the American invasion of Canada, as nearly all of them did, and to refuse absolution to all Catholics who sided with the Americans. However, as the case of the revolting Canadians was not purely political but pre-eminently moral, and more so, than the case of the revolting Catholics of the Thirteen Colonies, the conduct and action of the bishop and priests may be explained and justified on this ground.

When Canada passed under British rule in 1763, the Canadians were obliged to take the oath of allegiance and “swear that they will be faithful to King George and him will defend to the utmost of their power against all traitorous conspiracies made against his person, crown, and dignity, and will disclose all treasons against him, renouncing all dispensations from any power or person whomsoever.”⁹⁸) This oath of allegiance obliged Bishop Briand to enforce its observance. Therefore, he wrote in his mandate to the Canadians on May 22, 1775: “Yet there are still weightier motives (than gratitude to the gracious King). Your oaths of allegiance and your Religion impose upon you the indispensable obligation to defend your country and your King with all your power.”⁹⁹) This aspect was completely overlooked by Griffin. It was not the loyalty of Bishop Briand

⁹⁸) *Catholic Historical Review*, January 1933, vol. XVIII, p. 454.

⁹⁹) Gosselin, op. cit., vol. II, p. 3.

that preserved Canada for England but the unequivocal personal oath of allegiance which imposed upon the Bishop the duty to enforce its observance with the extreme penalties of the Church. Resistance to the government was for the Canadians aggravated treason. The Americans could justify their revolt by the principle that the unconstitutional acts of Parliament were illegal and not binding in conscience. Not so the Catholic Canadians, who had taken a personal oath to defend the government and had renounced even a papal dispensation from such oaths; they owed the British government more than political obedience, which was restricted by the articles of the Constitution. The historian Auguste Gosselin completely overlooks the vast difference between obedience due to England in virtue of a constitution and that imposed by a personal oath. "The first Christians," he writes, "were more sorely oppressed than the Americans and nevertheless submission to unjust rulers was preached to them John Carroll coming up to Canada to convert the Canadian clergy to the American cause showed a strange way of understanding the teachings of moral theology on obedience due to the legitimate authority of rulers."¹⁰⁰)

Bishop Briand excommunicated all Canadians who joined the American cause, and the priests refused absolution to all supporters of the Colonists. Many, even on their deathbed, refused to acknowledge their guilt and were denied the Sacraments and Christian burial, and in consequence were interred by the roadside. All who repented were obliged to make a

¹⁰⁰) Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 4, 27.

public retraction and do penance in public.¹⁰¹⁾ Frequently women were more ardent supporters of the Americans than men, and the danger was great that the Catholic peasantry would turn Presbyterian.¹⁰²⁾

Yet if we must concede to Bishop Briand the right to inflict on the Canadians the penalties mentioned by reason of their oath, we cannot justify his conduct towards the Catholic Indians of his diocese. They had not taken the oath of allegiance to England. Under International Law they were regarded as sovereign nations and as such concluded treaties with the European powers. The Catholic Indians of Maine and New Brunswick had been closely allied with the Province of Massachusetts Bay since 1764, and in 1776 entered into a treaty with the Americans to assist them in their struggle with England. The Canadian priest on Chaleurs Bay repeatedly refused them all Sacraments for no other reason than their loyalty to the Americans. They applied to Massachusetts Bay for priests and received, in the course of time, three French priests from there. The powerful tribe of Micmacs in Nova Scotia remained neutral despite their sympathies for the Americans, in order to secure the ministrations of the only Catholic priest in that region. From the standpoint of American patriotism this attitude must be deplored. The Catholic Micmacs could have easily wrested the whole of eastern Canada from the British and could have held it for the Americans, so that the United States would now extend to Newfoundland.

The third reason why Canada was lost in

¹⁰¹⁾ Ibid., vol. II, pp. 28-40; Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 19, 42, 77. ¹⁰²⁾ Gosselin, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 35. 37.

1776 to the American cause was, according to Mr. Griffin, "because the American soldiery did not know how to behave themselves . . . Though welcomed, and even recruited, by the Canadians, these invaders from the 'Protestant colonies' could not hold in abeyance their detestation of 'Popery', but among the very people they almost relied on for sustenance and support manifested that anti-Catholic spirit aroused by the Quebec Act in the 'free Protestant colonies.'" ¹⁰³) As a matter of fact, however, the bigotry of the American soldiers had little or no effect upon the change of sentiment towards the invaders. The Canadians of 1776 were not of the type of the present generation of Canadians. On October 1, 1763, Briand, the future bishop of Quebec, wrote: "If you except five or six of our burghers, the rest of the people remain in stupid and gross indifference" about their religion. ¹⁰⁴) The Canadians had strong material reasons to side with the Americans and clung to them despite all outbursts of bigotry. Not even the licentiousness of the soldiers could turn them against the invaders.

Germain wrote to General Burgoyne from London on March 28, 1776: "It is probable the Canadian peasantry may have seen the error of their conduct." ¹⁰⁵) About the same time the American General Philip Schuyler wrote to General George Clinton: "Our affairs in Canada are far from being in such a situation as I could wish; the scandalous licentiousness of

¹⁰³) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 220, vol. II, p. 164; re-statements in vol. I, pp. 102, 111, 139, 219, 243.

¹⁰⁴) Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 63.

¹⁰⁵) Report of Canadian Archives for 1904, Ottawa, p. 363.

our troops, the little care that has been taken to conciliate the affections of the Canadians, the jealousy that weighs between the troops from different colonies . . ."106) The warmth of the friendship of the Canadian peasants had cooled to a low degree. The French Canadians were much disaffected, which rendered it difficult to obtain supplies from them.

Yet a change came over them suddenly. On June 5, 1776, General Sullivan appeared in Canada with about 3,500 men. The same day he wrote to Washington from Sorel: "Our affairs here have taken a strange turn since our arrival. The Canadians are flocking by hundreds to take a part with us . . . I have sent out for carts and teams, etc. They have come in with the greatest cheerfulness, and what gives still greater evidence of their friendship is, that they have voluntarily offered to supply us with what meat, flour, etc. we want, and ask nothing in return but certificates. They begin to complain against their priests, and wish them to be secured; I shall, however, touch this string with great tenderness at present, as I know their sacerdotal influence."107) General Sullivan was neither deceived by appearances nor grossly imposed upon by false professions. The Canadians had grounded hopes that the Americans would now take Quebec and thereby secure their conquest. Three months after the retreat of the Americans, September 27, 1776, Bishop Briand wrote: "Almost the whole colony wishes Quebec should be taken."108)

106) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 221.

107) Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, vol. VI, Providence 1867, p. XXI.

108) Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 9.

Yet the fortunes of war were against the Americans. The ardor of Canadian friendship cooled increasingly with every defeat. Success was the price the Canadians demanded for their good will. Day by day the position of the Americans became more precarious, and with each day the Canadians lost more confidence in them. Finally the complete withdrawal of American troops from Canada was decided upon, and on June 17, 1776, the invaders left the country and Canada was lost forever to the American colonies.

An impartial review of the course of events brings out the fact that the all-overshadowing cause of the loss of Canada and the turning of the people against the Americans was their inability to take Quebec and conquer the whole country. Neither the bigotry of the invaders, nor the endeavors of the priests; neither the excommunications pronounced by Bishop Briand nor the abuses perpetrated by the American soldiery could turn the Canadian peasants against the revolting colonists: it was only ill luck on the battlefield which eventually cooled the ardor of the Canadian peasants for the struggle of the Colonies.

How are we to explain this stubborn adherence to the cause of the colonists, which was so contrary to the religious instincts of a Catholic people? The Canadians were a newly conquered people, endowed with a fine sense of chivalry. Naturally the wounds inflicted by their recent subjection under the rule of a government for which they had no sympathy still smarted. Then there was the oath forced upon them by the English ruler and now enforced by their bishop under threat of the severest pen-

alties of the Church for disobedience. They sought, with all the stratagems of casuistry, to elude the binding force of their oath¹⁰⁹⁾ but could not help being galled by the memory of it. As often as they were reminded of the oath, they were strengthened in their resolve to side with the Americans and palliate their disloyalty with contemplation of the example of the revolting colonists. Besides, the Canadians had retained an ardent love for their former master, and lived in hopes that the triumph of the Americans would restore them to France. As late as August 4, 1808, Governor Craig wrote from Quebec to Castlereagh: "The Canadians are French at heart. There would not be fifty dissenting voices, if the proposition was made of their re-annexation to France. The general opinion here among the English is that they would even join the Americans, if that force was commanded by a French officer."¹¹⁰⁾ Yet the strongest and most forceful motive for espousing the American cause was, strange to say, the Quebec Act, which restored the French laws and the system of tithes. The right of the clergy to collect tithes had a very perceptible effect upon the people. Whilst the clergy rejoiced at the restoration of their old privileges, the people in general hated the tithe system and Governor Carleton, who had been active in reintroducing it. The bestowal of the right of tithes upon the clergy proved a most effective reason for the Canadian peasantry to espouse the American cause.¹¹¹⁾

¹⁰⁹⁾ Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 25-27.

¹¹⁰⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1893, Ottawa, p. 14.

¹¹¹⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 102, 177.

We witness here the strange phenomenon that the same Bill, which added fuel to the anti-Catholic fire burning in the "free Protestant colonies" heaped it also upon the anti-clerical fire burning in Catholic Canada. The noblesse, or gentry, however, were won to England by the Quebec Act, because, as friends of America wrote from Montreal on April 28, 1775: "the pre-eminence given to their religion, together with a participation of honors and offices in common with the English, not only flatters their mutual pride and vanity, but is regarded by them as a mark of distinction and merit, that lays open their way to fortune."¹¹²⁾

*Services of the Canadian Catholics to the
American Cause*

All true friends of America in the U. S. must regret that the invitation addressed by the Continental Congress to the Canadians to unite with them in a common cause could not be accepted. The dream of Congress, that the Roman Catholic Province of Canada and the Protestant states would unite "in a common cause like the Swiss cantons, living in the utmost concord and peace with one another and thereby enabled ever since they bravely vindicated their freedom, to defy and defeat every tyrant,"¹¹³⁾ failed of realization for no other reason than the oath of allegiance. To conciliate the Catholic Canadians England passed the Quebec Act, which eventually caused both Protestant and Catholic colonists to turn against

¹¹²⁾ Ibid., p. 69.

¹¹³⁾ Address to the Inhabitants of Quebec, October 26, 1774, in: Journal, vol. I, p. 61.

the government. The real hold which England had on the Canadians was through the oath of allegiance. If the Quebec Act had not been passed, Bishop Briand would have been no less rigorously obliged to enforce the oath. Possibly, however, the clergy would have been less active in the interest of England and would have remained neutral to a greater degree. Moreover, the gentry might have made common cause with the peasantry. Yet, on the other hand, the peasantry would never have supported the American cause as they actually did. On November 24, 1784, Bishop Briand wrote to Governor Hamilton, "he had for twenty years preserved the people of his diocese in fidelity and impressed on them that they could neither be Christians nor true Catholics, if they were not faithful to their oaths, and subject to the power whom the Providence of God had placed over them."¹¹⁴) Accordingly Bishop Briand had inculcated the obligation contracted by the oath of allegiance upon his people ten years before the Quebec Act was passed and would have inculcated it, even if that Act never had been adopted. It was the oath and not "the voice of the head of the Church of Quebec, invoking the sacred principles of respect due to the ruling authority," as Cardinal Begin said,¹¹⁵) which erected an insuperable barrier against the Revolution.

Although Canada was finally lost to the Americans, the Catholic people of Canada nevertheless rendered very great services to the

¹¹⁴) Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, Ottawa, pp. 146-147; Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 99-100.

¹¹⁵) Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 101.

American cause. The first was that they weaned Congress away from its violent bigotry. In order to gain the alliance of the Catholic Canadians, Congress changed its tune in addressing those "Papists" in the north. In its first Address of October 26, 1774, it tells them that "when the fortunes of war had incorporated you with the body of English subjects, we rejoiced in the truly valuable addition, expecting our brave enemies would become our hearty friends, and that the Divine Being would bless you." Congress then recognizes a principle which no act of the British Parliament had ever recognized or would grant for many decades to come: "God gave liberty of conscience in your religion to you," and continues: "We are too well acquainted with the liberality of sentiment distinguishing your nation, to imagine that difference of religion will prejudice you against a hearty amity with us. We invite you to unite with us in one social compact, formed on the generous principles of equal liberty."¹¹⁶) In its second Address, of May 29, 1775, Congress declares: "We perceived the fate of the Protestant and Catholic colonies to be strongly linked together, and therefore invited you to join with us in resolving to be free. We can never believe that the present race of Canadians are so degenerated as to possess neither the spirit, the gallantry, nor the courage of their ancestors."¹¹⁷) Canada would have been too great a gain for the Revolutionary cause, so that self-interest dictated restraint of the outbursts of bigotry lest friendliness be jeopardized. In 1775 Congress authorized the

¹¹⁶) Journal, vol. I, pp. 55-61.

¹¹⁷) Op. cit., pp. 100-101.

Commissioners Livingston, Paine and Langdon to declare to the Canadians: "We hold sacred the right of conscience and shall never molest them in the free enjoyment of their religion."¹¹⁸) And Washington stated in his Address to the Inhabitants of Canada on September 14, 1775: "The United Colonies know no distinction but such as slavery, corruption and arbitrary domination may create;"¹¹⁹) and in the instructions of the same date, given to Arnold on the latter's departure on the expedition into Canada, he enjoined: "As the contempt of the religion of a country by ridiculing any of its ceremonies, or affronting its ministers, has ever been deeply resented, you are to be particularly careful to restrain every officer and soldier from such impudence and folly, and to punish every instance of it. On the other hand you are to protect and support the free exercise of the religion of the country and the undisturbed enjoyment of the rights of conscience in religious matters, with your utmost influence and authority."¹²⁰)

These messages of religious tolerance were something unheard of in the British realm. Congress was sincere in its promises of liberty of conscience and freedom of worship. In this regard it was more honest than the Parliament and the king with the restrictive and nullifying clauses of their Acts and Instructions. Our historians are unjust to Congress when they stress the unfortunate strictures on the Catholic religion contained in the Address to the People of Great Britain. In their attempt to

¹¹⁸) Griffin, vol. I, p. 102.

¹¹⁹) Ibid., vol. II, pp. 128-129, 274-275.

¹²⁰) Ibid., vol. I, pp. 14, 127.

gain the Catholic Canadians to their cause the leaders of the Revolt wore out their bigotry in less than one year's time. The Committee of Correspondence of Massachusetts sent out men who preached tolerance and distributed the Addresses of Congress in almost every farm house of Canada during the years 1774 to 1776.¹²¹⁾ Chief Justice Hey, in his report to the Lord Chancellor, dated Quebec, August 28, 1776, gives a graphic description of the pains the Americans had taken to win the Canadians.¹²²⁾

Naturally this tolerant attitude of the leaders reacted favorably upon the supporters of the American cause in the Thirteen Colonies: it was necessary to put an end to bigotry in order to prevent harm being done the Canadian campaign, and the despised and down-trodden Catholics in the country were for the first time found to be of any consequence. The bringing about of this change was the first great service rendered the American cause by the Catholic Canadians.

When Canada was finally lost, the Canadian peasants rendered an inestimable service to the Americans by remaining neutral. In his mandate of May 22, 1775, Bishop Briand told his people, "your oaths of allegiance and your religion impose upon you the indispensable obligation to defend your country and your King with all your power."¹²³⁾ Yet approximately 200 Catholic Canadians left with the Americans in June 1776 to fight in their ranks dur-

121) Gosselin, op. cit., vol. II, p. 10.

122) Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, p. 68.

123) Gosselin, op. cit., vol. II, p. 3.

ing the remainder of the war. The peasants remaining resisted all attempts of the British government to enroll them in their army. Although they did not fight for the Americans, they steadfastly refused to fight against them. They preserved their sympathy for the Americans just as well after the retreat of the colonists as during the invasion.

After the departure of the Americans from Canada the peasants made their peace with the Church and performed the penances imposed upon them for their conduct.¹²⁴⁾ Yet this return to submission was slow and gradual. Some did not submit and, at death, were denied Christian burial. Governor Carleton was even more hated than were the Bishop and the priests. The peasants who supported the Americans invariably called Carleton the "Roman Catholic devil." Yet despite their submission to the Church the Catholic Canadians could not be wholly trusted by the British government.¹²⁵⁾

Since it had proven most precarious to depend upon the Canadian peasants, the British government was forced to bring in Irish and German soldiers to secure the country against further incursions of the Americans. In April, 1776, seven regiments from Ireland, one from England, and about 2,100 German troops sailed for Canada and little less than 3,000 other German troops followed in the course of the year.¹²⁶⁾ England could not have done anything more apt to turn the Canadian peasantry

¹²⁴⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I., p. 77.

¹²⁵⁾ Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II., pp. 66, 77-93.

¹²⁶⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1904, pp. 363-364.

against her than to bring in the German mercenaries. Most of them being bitterly anti-Catholic, they abused and maltreated the Catholic inhabitants shamefully, in short the German troops were a real curse to the people and speedily destroyed the scant good will towards the British government which might have been engendered in their hearts after the withdrawal of the Americans.¹²⁷⁾

The greatest service the Catholic Canadians rendered the American cause was performed in the winter of 1776 and 1777, when, by their neutrality, they saved the Americans from annihilation. As is well known, the cause of the revolting colonists seemed lost in December, 1776. Washington wrote to his brother on December 18 of that year: "The game is lost. I am at the end of my tether." He repeated the same woe-ful cry five days later, December 23.¹²⁸⁾ If the Canadian peasants had not, in this extremity, forced England by their hostile attitude against the government, to maintain a large force in Canada, the evil forebodings of Washington would have come true, "the game would have been lost" indeed, and the Revolutionary movement would have ended in utter disaster. As the case was, the neutrality of the Canadian peasants at that time proved an effective and powerful force in the struggle. In a similar, though less effective way, the neutrality of the Catholic Canadians was, throughout the entire Revolutionary War, a powerful aid to the struggling Americans, by forcing England to keep a large force in Canada which she greatly

¹²⁷⁾ Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 94-96.

¹²⁸⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 270.

needed on the battlefields in the Thirteen Colonies. But for the Canadian peasants and their French kin across the Atlantic the revolting colonists would have been crushed by England.

The Canadian peasants preserved their sympathies for the American cause throughout the Revolutionary War. Bishop Briand admitted on April 27, 1777, that "there still remain in our country many 'Bostonnais' hearts (i. e. sympathizers with the American cause). Some even betray themselves by their conduct."¹²⁹) The French alliance with the Americans, however, increased the number of "Bostonnais" hearts immeasurably. Haldimand, Governor of Canada, wrote from Quebec on October 25, 1780, to Germain that a "change of minds had taken place in many of the priesthood, since France was known to have joined the Rebels."¹³⁰) Yet the historian Auguste Gosselin points out that the people and the clergy remained neutral.¹³¹) That is true. If, however, the Americans had carried out their plans of a second invasion of Canada in 1780, all would have been changed. Bishop Briand would not, as in 1775 and 1776, have found "every priest a British spy." Most of the priests were, like Briand himself, native Frenchmen and could not have been so easily restrained from aiding their countrymen. The peasants would have espoused the American cause just as ardently as they had done five years earlier. Bishop Briand himself would have relaxed in his ardent support of England, disillusioned of his belief in

¹²⁹) Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 110.

¹³⁰) Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, p. 119. Griffin, op. cit., vol. I, p. 82.

¹³¹) Gosselin, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 104-05.

the mildness of the British government through the many annoyances caused him by Governor Haldimand. This governor did not pursue the policy of his predecessor Carleton, who had simply tabled the anti-Catholic Instructions he had received from the "mildest" King. Haldimand tried to enforce some of them to the greatest chagrin of the staunch supporter of the British government.

At any rate a complete change had come over both the Canadian peasants and their priests. Boyer Pillon reported to Washington from Montreal on September 7, 1780, that three fourths of the Canadians favored the Americans.¹³²⁾ In all probability Bishop Briand would have been unable to enforce neutrality, still less active participation on the side of the British.

The Americans entertained exaggerated notions concerning the influence of the Canadian clergy over their people. John Brown, writing from Montreal on March 29, 1775, to the Committee of Correspondence in Boston, declared: "The Curates or Priests have almost the entire government of the temporal as well as spiritual affairs of the French people."¹³³⁾ And John Adams wrote on February 18, 1776, that "the anathemas of the church, so terrible to the Canadians, had a disagreeable effect upon them."¹³⁴⁾ Yet we have seen how precarious a hold the clergy had over their people. Those Catholic peasants defied the anathemas of the Church and would rather jeopardize their eternal salvation than renounce their friendship

¹³²⁾ Report of Canadian Archives for 1890, p. 129.

¹³³⁾ Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 113.

¹³⁴⁾ Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. LXXII, 1917, p. 207.

for the Americans. And how slender was the control exercised by Bishop Briand over his flock! In his mandate of May 22, 1775, he declared categorically: "Your oaths of allegiance and your religion impose upon you the indispensable obligation to defend your country and your King with all your power."¹³⁵) But the body of his people gave such scant heed to him that they vigorously aided the enemy, so that the bishop, who is credited with preserving Canada for England, found himself hard put to it to insure neutrality. By virtue of their oath the people were obliged to take active part in the defense of the country and this active participation Bishop Briand and the priests could never achieve, no matter how frequently they threatened to deny the sacraments to offenders and to excommunicate them. Mr. Griffin declares, "Bishop Briand was worth many bataillons" in securing Canada to England.¹³⁶) But these bataillons were grievously worsted during the invasion of the Americans and would have been completely annihilated in a second invasion. We must take things as they were: the Canadians were not the priest-ridden people the Americans believed them to be, nor that sterling race of Catholics at present living in that country. That Bishop Briand was eventually successful in a small degree in holding Canada to England is due solely to the ill luck of the American army during the invasion.

After the victory at Yorktown the situation in Canada became most critical, as is revealed by a "most secret" letter addressed by Governor

¹³⁵) Gosselin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 3.

¹³⁶) Griffin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 273.

Haldimand to Germain from Quebec on November 23, 1781. If the Americans had invaded Canada at that time, history would today establish how powerless Bishop Briand was in preserving Canada for England.

Conclusion

Our study reveals a widely spread sympathy with the American Revolt on the part of the Catholics of North America. Yet the motives, for which the various groups espoused the cause of the revolting Colonies differed according to places and the races in question. The English, Irish, German and French Catholics found in the Declaration of Independence the expression of their national and local aspirations. And in each and every case material interests predominated. Nowhere do we find proof of an alleged perception on the part of the people of an "accordance of the political principles of the Declaration of Independence with Catholic philosophy."

We have seen how insignificant was the part the Catholics in the Thirteen Colonies had taken in the struggle with England. We need not magnify unduly the participation of the Catholics of the British colonies south of the St. Lawrence River nor to overlook the great aid rendered the Americans by the Catholic peasantry of Canada. At any rate the American Declaration of Independence was written with golden letters into the Book of History by 1,200 German Catholic soldiers fighting in the French army, by 2,000 Irish Catholic soldiers fighting in the French and Spanish armies, by 14,000 Spanish Catholic soldiers clearing the south of

the British and setting the stage for the final victory at Yorktown, and by 45,280 French Catholic soldiers and sailors, who won independence for the United States. On the battlefield at Yorktown, where the British forces were crushed and independence secured, there were five times as many Catholics as Protestants fighting for American liberty. The American Revolution was a distinctively Protestant movement and was crowned with success by a Catholic victory, the surrender of the British forces at Yorktown on October 19, 1781.

