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**«Любить все человечество, кроме американцев»:  
североамериканские колонии Британии  
в сочинениях Сэмюэла Джонсона<sup>1</sup> \***

В центре внимания статьи — взгляды английского интеллектуала и лексикографа Сэмюэла Джонсона (1709–1784) на права и свободы жителей североамериканских колоний Британии. Объясняются причины негативного восприятия Джонсоном попыток колонистов добиться отмены налоговых сборов и получения представительства в английском парламенте. Литератор относился к американским колонистам с презрением, поскольку считал их либо потомками первых колонистов, угнетавших и порабощавших аборигенное население, либо «надсмотрщиками» рабов. Более того, антипатия лексикографа основывалась на представлении о том, что большинство американских колонистов являлись выходцами из социальных низов, преступниками и нищими, нарушавшими спокойствие в Англии и часто бежавшими от правосудия в Новый свет. Волнения в американских колониях в 1770-е годы лишь усугубили эти представления Джонсона. Мировоззренческие установки не позволяли лексикографу понять, почему американским колонистам недостаточно быть подданными британской короны без права выбирать своих представителей в парламент, поэтому колонисты казались ему сторонниками анархии, желающими поколебать устоявшийся в Британии порядок.

*Сэмюэл Джонсон; Эдмунд Берк; история Британии XVIII века; Война за независимость североамериканских колоний Британии; первый Континентальный конгресс*

The transformation of Britain into a dominant colonial power at the end of the Seven Years' War led to significant problems in the control of its vast remote possessions. The result was that “there were plans”, in the metropolis, “to introduce taxes in the colonies, which would go to the maintenance of the colonial administration and army, as well as possibly enrich the treasury of Great Britain” [Соколов, 2015, с. 208]. The Sugar (1764), the Currency (1764), the Quartering (1765) and the Stamp (1765) Acts, enacted by the Grenville ministry, caused resentment among American colonists. Fears of a possible invasion by the French disappeared after the conquest of Canada in 1759–1760. As a result, many colonists questioned, “Why now should they pay more taxes to support the army when France does not threaten them?” [Макарова, 2015, с. 73]. Opponents of the Stamp Act held a congress in New York in October 1765, where they adopted a resolution, which stated that “the act undermines the rights and freedoms of the colonists”, and proclaimed the slogan “no taxation without representation”, which became one of the main stipulations of the American patriots to the British Parliament. As soon as news of mass demonstrations and riots in the thirteen colonies had reached London, the Stamp Act was repealed. At the same time in Britain discussions flared up about how to resolve the American issue.

Discussions about whether the demands of American colonists were legitimate were led by not only members of parliament but also representatives of the intellectual elite, to which should be added the English writer and lexicographer Samuel Johnson (1709–1784). In this regard, the aim of this article is to study the ideas of the literary “dictator” of England, particularly about the rights and freedoms of inhabitants of the North American colonies of Britain.

Although the American issue was central in the political debates of Britain from the middle 1770s to early 1780s, in Johnsonian studies this problem was surprisingly absent until the 1960s when a revisionist trend in American and British historiography began to develop. American researcher Donald Greene became the first historian, who “incorporated” Johnson into the political context of the era. In a monograph

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entitled “The Politics of Samuel Johnson”, which was published in 1960, the historian introduced the pamphlet “Taxation No Tyranny” into scholarly circulation. D. Greene wrote about the pamphlet: “Those who admire Johnson generally pass over the pamphlet with an embarrassed smile, and those who do not admire him denounce it as the most shameful and damning piece of evidence of his blind Toryism” [Greene, 2009, p. 212]. Recognizing Johnson’s hostility toward American colonists, the historian does not explore the origins of such dislike towards subjects of the British crown in British America.

Another American researcher, Thomas Curley, also focuses upon this issue in the later article [Curley, 1994]. In contrast to his predecessor, Curley’s work covers the entire period of the lexicographer’s creative career from his early works in *Gentlemen’s Magazine* to the already mentioned pamphlet, “Taxation No Tyranny”. According to the researcher “three convictions shaped his [Johnson’s] outlook on the war-torn western hemisphere of the eighteenth century: 1) a patriotic love of homeland; 2) his instinctive hatred of racism; 3) his courageous opposition to imperialism” (Ibid., p. 36).

Modern studies continue the traditions of Green and Curley, “deepening” the understanding of Johnson’s texts, particularly in relation to specific contexts. An example of this type is the analysis of Johnson’s views on the American Revolution, reflected in the work of the British historian, Jonathan Clark. The researcher admitted that the pamphlet “Taxation No Tyranny” was “not the act of a government hireling, but the statement of a position in which he profoundly believed” [Clark, 1994, p. 226]. A recent study written by Nicholas Hudson (20) also focuses on Johnson’s latest pamphlet. According to the historian, “Taxation...” reflected the views of the conservative part of the public, who advocated decisive action to suppress discontent in the American colonies.

None of the researchers disputed Dr. Johnson’s blatant hostility towards the American colonists. However, there is still a gap in examining the lexicographer’s views on the War of Independence in the North American colonies and their relation to the ideas of the English Enlightenment. Firstly, Johnson’s dislike for the colonists was caused by his rejection of colonial conquests in America. Johnson presented his first criticisms of colonial policy by imitating Swift in magnificent satirical language in the “Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia”, published in *Gentlemen’s Magazine* in 1738. In the text the writer described the atrocities of Spain, a main colonial power. The author writes about the cruelty of the first colonists: “Even Iberia (*Spain*), a Country at the Southwest Point of Degulia (*Europe*), whose Inhabitants were the first Discoverers of Columbia, tho’ she boasts herself Mistress of the richest and most fertile part of that Quarter of the World, which she secured to herself by the most dreadful Massacres and Devastations, has not yet, in all the Gold she has imported, received an Equivalent for the Numbers of her Natives sent out to people those Kingdoms her Sword has wanted; so that the whole Advantage of her mighty Conquests, is Bulk without Strength, and Pride without Power” [Debates... , 1738, p. 286]. The lexicographer maintained his condemnation of the colonial policy throughout his life, since he believed that the settlement and development of America was carried out by violating the natural rights of native American inhabitants and African slaves.

Another reason, according to Johnson, to condemn the inhabitants of British America was that the American colonists voluntarily left their homeland, which requires everyone to stay to benefit it. In the short time that the lexicographer was the publisher of the *Literary Magazine* in 1756, he criticized emigration to the colonies: “It ought to be considered that every inhabitant gained to the colonies, is lost to the mother country. That the people sent into these unbounded regions, are diffused over vast tracts, to such a distance as to be disabled from instructing or helping one another, and are therefore less useful and less happy than at home. <...> To free ourselves from beggars and strollers by sending them to America, is a cure an ulcer by cutting off the limb” [Johnson, 1977b, p. 176].

Different motive for his censure of American colonists was that he assumed they all came from the lower classes of English society. They were forced to leave their homeland because of crimes or misadventures. Evidence of this appears in a conversation with Boswell: “Sir, they (*Americans*) are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging” [Boswell, 1998, p. 590]. Thus, Johnson represents the colonists as disobedient children of his self-sufficient homeland. Therefore, in the writer’s view, the colonists should remain in the shadow of the metropole, without daring to grumble at the British government: “These settlements, when they are once made, must keep a perpetual correspondence with the original country, to which they are subject, and on which they depend for protection in danger, and supplies in necessity” [Johnson, 1977a, p. 141].

The start of debates about the thirteen colonies was made by a dispute between W. Pitt and G. Grenville about the Stamp Act in 1765. Pitt spoke out strongly against the levy and advised to treat Americans as guilty children and proceed like “a kind and affectionate parent over a child whom he tenderly loves” [The Parliamentary, vol. 17, 1813, p. 1356]. He looked at Americans with great sympathy, preferring

“poverty and freedom to gilded chains and a miserable abundance” [Ibid., vol. 18, p. 154], and advocated reconciliation and the withdrawal of troops from Boston to calm the colonies.

G. Grenville, the initiator of the introduction of new fees at the end of the Seven Years War, reasoned completely differently. “When they (*the American colonists*) want the protection of this kingdom, they are always very ready to ask it”, wrote Grenville in 1766, “the nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them their protection; and now they are called upon to contribute a small share towards the public expense... they renounce your authority, insult your officers, and break out, I might almost say, into open rebellion... Ungrateful people of America!” [Grenville, 1766, p. 9–10]. Pitt, who served as British Prime Minister from July 30, 1766 to October 14, 1768, won the argument. He canceled the Stamp Act and “adopted the Act of supremacy, which emphasized the dependence of the colonies on the crown and parliament of Great Britain” [Соколов, 2015, с. 211].

However, Pitt’s victory was pyrrhic, and the dispute over the rights and freedoms of the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies continued with new vigor in North’s premiership (1770–1782). The actions of his cabinet, which advocated a harsh policy against the rebellious colonies, led to a wave of protests and the creation of the First Continental Congress, convened on September 5, 1774 in Philadelphia. One of its most important results was the “Declaration of Rights” of October 14, 1774, which stated not only the rights of American colonists but also their demands to the British parliament, particularly in repealing “repressive acts” to restore relations between the metropolis and the colonies.

Dr. Johnson, who remained aloof from the discussion about the thirteen colonies for a long time after publishing the “Declaration of Rights” again took up his pen to write his last political pamphlet: “Taxation no Tyranny: an answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress”. In a letter to James Boswell on January 21, 1775, the writer reported: “I am going to write about Americans. If you have picked up any hints among your lawyers, who are great masters of the law of nations, or if your own mind suggests any thing, let me know. But mum, it is a secret” [Johnson, 2014a, p. 170]. Johnson’s pamphlet was published on March 8 of the same year and represented a conservative English response to the statements of the First Continental Congress.

“Taxation no Tyranny” is a document that deserves to take its rightful place in the literature of the American Revolution. On the pages of the pamphlet, Johnson queried if the metropolis, meaning Britain, has a right to tax its colonies? Of course, the response of the writer was affirmative. However, his argument is particularly interesting, since it allows us to reconstruct Johnson’s ideas about the rights and privileges of American colonists. In the text, following the theory of the social contract of J. Locke, the author writes that “the supreme power of every community has the right of requiring from all its subjects such contributions as are necessary to the public safety or public prosperity” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 411]. In the Americans’ resistance to the established order, Johnson saw the machinations of “zealots of anarchy”, denying the right of the British parliament to tax American colonies.

Johnson defines the tax as “a payment exacted by authority from part of the community for the benefit of the whole” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 417]. According to him, all subjects of the empire are subject to taxation, since they all enjoy the benefits of the government. However, “the Americans have never openly denied. That it is their duty to pay the cost of their own safety they seem to admit; nor do they refuse their contribution to the exigencies, whatever they may be, of the British empire; but they make this participation of the public burden a duty of very uncertain extent, and imperfect obligation, a duty temporary, occasional and elective, of which they reserve to themselves the right of settling the degree, the time, and the duration, of judging when it may be required, and when it has been performed” [Ibid., p. 418].

Moreover, according to the writer, “He that denies the English Parliament the right of taxation denies it likewise the right of making any other laws civil or criminal” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 427]. Since the colonies are “constituent parts of the British Empire”, the writer reasons on the pages of the pamphlet, “the inhabitants incorporated by English charters, are intitled to all the rights of Englishmen. They are governed by English laws, entitled to English dignities, regulated by English counsels, and protected by English arms; and it seems to follow by consequence not easily avoided, that they are subject to English government, and chargeable by English taxation” [Ibid., p. 425].

However, after leaving the British Isles, as Johnson believes, the settlers lost part of their rights, since “he that will enjoy the brightness of sunshine, must quit the coolness of the shade. He, who goes voluntarily to America, cannot complain of losing what he leaves in Europe”. Crossing the Atlantic, the colonist of his choice left the homeland, “where he had a vote and little property, for another, where he has great property, but no vote” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 429]. According to the preacher and one of the founders of Methodism, John Wesley (1703–1791), Americans previously were able to “inherit all the privileges which their ancestors had: but they can inherit no more” [Wesley, 1775, p. 7].

Johnson repeatedly mentioned the significance of the American territories for Britain: “A colony is to the mother-country as a member to the body, deriving its action and its strength from the general principle of vitality; receiving from the body, and communicating to it, all the benefits and evils of health and disease; liable in dangerous maladies to sharp applications, of which the body however must partake the pain; and exposed, if incurably tainted, to amputation, by which the body likewise will be mutilated” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 425].

Therefore, as if anticipating the further development of events in the American colonies, Johnson warned the rebels “that it is not very reasonable to jump into the sea, because the ship is leaky” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 451], yielding to the “insanity of independence” that spread among the colonies and leads only to “misrule, uproar, violence and confusion” [Ibid., p. 438].

And yet, at the beginning of 1775, it seemed to the writer that the unrest in the American colonies could be silenced by threats and force. He had no idea that this could lead to a long war. He considered British America to be an integral part of Britain, and not a separate self-sufficient community. That’s why Americans were considered by the lexicographer as stubborn recalcitrant colonists, thirsty for more than they actually deserve, though “they have therefore exactly what their ancestors left them, not a vote in making laws, or who voluntarily resigned them for something... but the happiness of being protected by law, and the duty of obeying it” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 431].

But the greatest confusion for the lexicographer was the concern of the colonists and their supporters in Britain over the fact that “subordination of the Americans” could lead to a decrease in British freedoms. The answer to the doubts of the American patriots was the famous phrase: “if slavery be thus fatally contagious, how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?” [Johnson, 1977c, p. 454].

Johnson’s firmness on the question of how to resolve the American crisis through the quiet submission of the colonists to the British crown, so vividly reflected in the pages of the pamphlet, made the thirteen colonies the subject of widespread public discussion. At the beginning of September 1775 “the gentlemen, clergy, manufacturers and inhabitants of Manchester submitted an address to the king pledging support for the war” [Colley, 2003, p. 138]. This local initiative grew into a real “battle of petitions”. Thus, traditionally the royalist counties of Northern England, as well as Scotland, came out in support of the war, viewing “what is happening overseas as a new rebel of the dissenters against the king” [Макарова, 2005, с. 74], while residents of East England and Wales who sympathized to the Americans, on the contrary, submitted petitions against the war.

British intellectuals did not avoid the discussion. Some of them, for example, J. Wesley, echoed Johnson, believing in Locke’s spirit that the power of the British crown over the colonies was given “for the [achievement](#) of peace, safety and the welfare of all people” [Лабутина, Ильин, 2012, с. 33]. So, the theologian wrote that “the English parliament has an undoubted right to tax all the English Colonies” [Wesley, 1775, p. 10].

A different opinion about the residents of thirteen colonies was held by Edmund Burke, a former friend of Johnson, which kept them both on opposite sides of the barricades. The opinion of Burke is most clearly reflected in the famous speech of reconciliation with the colonies, delivered on March 22, 1775 in the House of Commons. Unlike other parliamentarians, Burke sought to consider Americans as a separate people, with “their own values and priorities” [Hudson, 2004, p. 189]. Therefore, he warned that “preserving the unity of the empire requires careful and deliberate decisions” [Чудинов, 1996, с. 30], and opposed a tough policy towards the colonies. Exploring the circumstances of the American thirst for freedom, Burke also mentioned the amazing maturity of the New World: “Young man, there is America — which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage man, and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, shew itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world” [The Parliamentary, 1813, vol. 18, p. 488].

However, even Burke suggested that the metropolis had the right to demand obedience from the colonies. The representative of the radical English Enlightenment, philosopher, scientist and social activist, Joseph Priestley, on the contrary, encouraged the resolve of the American colonists to defend their rights and freedoms. As Priestley wrote in the essay of 1768, “it is evident, that there must have been a gross inattention to the very first principles of liberty, to say nothing worse, in the first scheme of taxing the inhabitants of America in the British Parliament” [Priestley, 1771, p. 23]. In Priestley’s view, whose opinion was directly opposed to the judgments of Johnson, people have the right to rebel against monarchs, if they do not concern themselves with the welfare of their citizens.

Dr. Johnson believed that such thoughts were subversive and could only [exacerbate](#) the situation in the colonies. One day, the writer angrily imparted his thoughts about this in a conversation with Mrs. Thrale: “I will unfold to you the gay prospects of futurity. This people, now so innocent and harmless, shall draw the sword against their mother country, and bathe its point in the blood of their benefactors: this people,

now concerned with a little, shall then refuse to spare, what they themselves confess the could not miss; and these men, now so honest and grateful, in return for peace and for protection, see their vile agents in the house of parliament to sow the seeds of sedition, and propagate confusion, perplexity, and pain. <...> I promise you that anarchy, poverty, and death shall, by my care, be carried even across the spacious Atlantic, and settle in America itself, the sure consequences of our beloved whiggism” [Piozzi, 1786, p. 43].

In the future Johnson supported the government’s attempts to find a peaceful solution to the American issue without enthusiasm: “... if lives can be saved, some deviation from rigid policy may be excused” [Johnson, 2014b, p. 186]. However, by the end of his life, Johnson was horrified by the failures of the war in North America and the thoughts about the weakness of his country. As he admitted in a letter to lawyer Sir Robert Chambers: “I cannot but suffer some pain when I compare the state of this kingdom, with that in which we triumphed twenty years ago. I have at least endeavoured to preserve order and support Monarchy” [Johnson, 2014c, p. 124]. However, he was less and less thinking about this, as his health deteriorated and began to get worse. The writer was, “as his beloved homeland appeared to be, on the decline and preferred concentrating on the matter of his mortality than on the ephemera of politics” (Curley, p. 68).

Thus, in the view of Dr. Johnson, the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies were subjects of the British crown and had to honor it for their happiness. The writer treated American colonists with disdain because they were either descendants of the first colonists who oppressed and enslaved the aboriginal population or were supervisors of slaves brought from the African continent. In addition, the antipathy of the lexicographer was based on the idea that most of the American colonists came from the lower classes, criminals and beggars who disturbed the peace in England, and often [ran away from](#) justice to the New World. Unrest in the American colonies in the 1770s only exacerbated Johnson’s impressions. Ideological motivations prevented the lexicographer from understanding why it was not enough for American colonists to be subjects of the British crown without having the right to elect their representatives to parliament. That’s why the colonists seemed to him supporters of anarchy, wanting to upset the order established in England. The victory of the thirteen colonies in the War of Independence became a national tragedy and marked the end of the Johnson era and the beginning of a new page in the history of Britain.

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#### **“I am willing to love all mankind, except an American”:**

#### **Britain’s North American Colonies in Samuel Johnson’s Works <sup>2</sup> \***

The article focuses on a British intellectual and lexicographer Samuel Johnson’s (1709–1784) views on the rights and freedoms of people living in Britain’s North American colonies. It accounts for the reasons of Johnson’s negative attitude to colonial people’s attempts to repeal taxes and seek representation in the English parliament. The writer despised American colonists, for he believed them to descend from the first settlers who had oppressed and enslaved the indigenous population. Moreover, the lexicographer believed that the majority of American colonists belonged to the lower classes, were descendants of criminals and paupers who had disturbed the peace in the Old World and had fled to the New World to escape their just punishment. The unrest in the American colonies in the 1770s only aggravated Johnson’s prejudices. His worldview prevented the lexicographer from understanding why American colonists weren’t satisfied with the position of British subjects and wanted to be represented in the British Parliament. Johnson believed that American colonists were anarchists wishing to shatter the British rule.

*Samuel Johnson; Edmund Burke; Britain’s history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; War of Independence; the First Continental Congress*

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