

as well as at sea." Thus began Maryland's oldest and finest tradition—the tradition of freedom, of tolerance, of respect for the rights of others. It was "unity and peace" that Cecilius Calvert sought, and in his wisdom he knew the colonists could not remain united and at peace if they quarreled about religion.

Freedom of conscience became a part of the thinking and habits of these early Marylanders, and 15 years later the principle was embodied in a statute, adopted by the freemen of the Colony in General Assembly at St. Mary's City, then the capital of Maryland. This famous Act of Religious Toleration, as it has come to be called, said that no man should "be in any ways troubled, molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion." It went a step further to impose fines or imprisonment upon anyone who should "in a reproachful manner or way" disparage another's religion.

The purpose of the Act, it was written, was "to preserve mutual love and amity amongst the inhabitants of the new province." And thus, the Act of Religious Toleration not only guaranteed freedom of worship and freedom of conscience, but it proclaimed that a decent respect for one another is the duty of free men and one of the bulwarks of a free state.

We know that this Act of 1649 was an initial step in the great movement for religious freedom in the New World that culminated in the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which said, in part, that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The principle enunciated by the second Lord Baltimore and the freemen of St. Mary's City nearly a century and a half later became a foundation stone in the Bill of Rights of our new Republic. It is echoed in the preamble to our own Maryland Declaration of Rights, which begins: "We, the people of the State of Maryland, grateful to almighty God for our civil and religious liberty . . .," and so on.

Cecilius Calvert and the men he brought to this "haven of peace" which he called Mary Land set a course for a nation to follow toward peace. His instruction to his brother Leonard, named as Governor, and the two Commissioners who were to assist him in the enforcement of the charter granted by Charles I, was, as we have seen, that they "be very careful to preserve peace and unity" among the people of the province. And the famous Act of Religious Toleration which he confirmed a few years later called for the preservation of "mutual love and amity amongst the inhabitants of Mary Land."