

Love of freedom is not ungodliness. But as important as are our written laws, the existence of a Constitution—even if it were ungodly, which it was not—would not alter the fact that the people of the United States were unyieldingly religious. . . .

It was inevitable that Christianity, and the great moral principles which embody its doctrine, retain a strong hold on the public mind in the United States. For truly our nation was conceived, born and nurtured in Christianity. Its earliest settlers were Puritans and Catholics from the British Isles, Lutherans from Holland and Sweden, followed by Quakers, Presbyterians, Huguenots, Moravians and religious denominations too numerous to list. All, or nearly all, came to these shores with one purpose in mind: to find on this wild new continent a sanctuary in which they could worship God unmolested and without restraint.

We only need to look to the history of our own State of Maryland to find a classical example of this pattern of colonization. I refer to the celebration of a mass by Father Andrew White on Annunciation Day, May 25, 1634. It was the first recorded event after the settlers of Lord Baltimore's colony landed on St. Clement's Island in St. Mary's County. Shortly thereafter, on the mainland, a church was built, in which both Protestants and Catholics worshipped.

The succeeding chapters in this early history of the colony of the Calverts are among the most glorious in all the annals of Maryland. On April 2, 1649, at St. Mary's City, then the capital of Maryland, freemen gathered for a meeting of the General Assembly of the colony. Sixteen bills or proposed laws for the colony were before them for approval, and on April 21 the Assembly passed one of them which was entitled "An Act Concerning Religion." This legislation came to be known as the Religious Toleration Act. The "Act Concerning Religion" was Maryland's notable contribution in a long struggle of the American people toward complete religious freedom. It was one of the pioneer statutes passed by the legislative body of an organized colonial government to guarantee any degree of religious liberty. It granted freedom of conscience to all Christians.

In the early years of the colony, a large measure of freedom of conscience became a part of the thinking and habits of Marylanders. The Calverts were firm advocates of the separation of church and state, a doctrine which was to achieve fruition in the Bill of Rights which was adopted as a part of the Constitution of the independent United States of America.

Maryland under the Calverts became a veritable asylum of religious