

been acclaimed far and wide as the first law guaranteeing religious freedom enacted in the new world. It was, indeed, one of the first laws of our Christian civilization in which men and women were given protection to worship God in accordance with the dictates of their consciences. The eminent Maryland author and historian, Gerald W. Johnson, of Baltimore, said of the Religious Toleration Act: "It was a law made by civilized men who believed that a decent show of respect for one another is one of the duties of freemen and one of the bulwarks of a free state."

As significant as was this single achievement, it is not historically correct to say that religious toleration began in Maryland with the passage in 1649 of the "Act Concerning Religion." "But this Act," writes the historian James McSherry, "in its best provisions was only the solemn recording of that law which had heretofore governed the province, and which had been laid down by its Catholic founders and proclaimed for its first settlement."

The province of Maryland, conceived by George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, but actually founded by his son Cecilius, was established by the Calverts, father and son, as a haven for persecuted Catholics. Aboard the Ark and the Dove were Protestants as well as Catholics, and the Calverts welcomed, even sought, Protestant settlers. Prior to the embarkation of the colonists, the second Lord Baltimore issued a set of instructions to his brother Leonard, the Governor, and the Commissioners. In the first paragraph of the instructions, he warned the Catholic and Protestant colonists that they were not to give offense one to another in matters of religion, adding that this instruction was to be obeyed on land as well as at sea. In the fifteen years between the landing and the enactment of the Act of Religious Toleration, the colonists obeyed this edict of religious toleration in a manner that was remarkable for the times. Catholics and Protestants, as we know, shared a single chapel building in this city. In the booklet giving a brief history of this church, it is written that "the first services of the Church of England were held near here in 1634 in a rude Indian hut," and "by 1638 a brick chapel was built close by this site and was shared with our Roman Catholic Brethren."

Our Maryland records further disclose the extent to which these religious toleration decrees of Cecilius Calvert were enforced. In 1638, one William Lewis, a Catholic, was charged by his Protestant servants of proselyting by force of his authority. He was tried by a predominantly Catholic court, found guilty and fined 500 pounds of tobacco. Three years later, Thomas Gerard, also a Catholic was charged with