

A L A W
O F
M A R Y L A N D
Concerning
R E L I G I O N.



As much as in a well-governed and Christian Commonwealth, Matters concerning Religion and the Honour of God ought to be in the first place to be taken into serious consideration, and endeavoured to be settled. Be it therefore Ordained and Enacted by the Right Honourable *CÆCILIUS* Lord Baron of *Baltimore*, absolute Lord and Proprietary of this Province, with the Advice and Consent of the Upper and Lower House of this General Assembly, That whatsoever person or persons within this Province and the Islands thereunto belonging, shall from henceforth blaspheme GOD, that is curse him; or shall deny our Saviour JESUS CHRIST to be the Son of God; or shall deny the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, & Holy Ghost; or the Godhead of any of the said Three Persons of the Trinity, or the Unity of the Godhead, or shall use or utter any reproachful speeches, words, or language, concerning the Holy Trinity, or any of the said three Persons thereof, shall be punished with death, and confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her Lands and Goods to the Lord Proprietary and his Heirs.

And be it also enacted by the Authority, and with the advice and assent aforesaid, That whatsoever person or persons shall from henceforth use or utter any reproachful words or speeches concerning the blessed Virgin *MARY*, the Mother of our Saviour, or the holy Apostles or Evangelists, or any of them, shall in such case for the first Offence forfeit to the said Lord Proprietary and his Heirs, Lords and Proprietaries of this Province, the sum of Five pounds Sterling, or the value thereof to be levied on the goods and chattels of every such person so offending; but in case such offender or offenders shall not then have goods and chattels sufficient for the satisfying of such forfeiture, or that the same be not otherwise speedily satisfied, that then such offender or offenders shall be publicly whipt, and be imprisoned during the pleasure of the Lord Proprietary, or the Lieutenant or Chief Governor of this Province for the time being: And that every such offender and offenders for every second offence shall forfeit Ten Pounds Sterling, or the value thereof to be levied as aforesaid; or in case such offender or offenders shall not then have goods and chattels within this Province sufficient for that purpose, then to be publicly and severely whipt and imprisoned as before is expressed: and that every person or persons before mentioned, offending herein the third time, shall for such third offence, forfeit all his lands and goods, and be for ever banisht and expelled out of this Province.

And be it also further Enacted by the same Authority, advice, and assent, That whatsoever person or persons shall from henceforth upon any occasion of offence, or otherwise in a reproachful manner or way, declare, call, or denominate, any person or persons whatsoever, inhabiting, residing, trafficking, trading, or commercing within this Province, or within any the Ports, Harbours, Creeks or Havens to the same belonging, an Heretick, Schismatick, Idolater, Puritan, Presbyterian, Independant, Popish Priest, Jesuit, Jesuited Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, Brownist, Barrowist, Antinomian, Roundhead, Separatist, or other name or term in a reproachfull manner relating to matter of Religion, shall for every such offence forfeit and lose the sum of Ten shillings Sterling, or the value thereof, to be levied of the goods and chattels of every such offender and offenders, the one half thereof to be forfeited and paid unto the person & persons of whom such reproachful words are, or shall be spoken or uttered, and the other half thereof to the Lord Proprietary and his Heirs, Lords and Proprietaries of this Province: But if such person or persons who shall at any time utter or speak any such reproachful words or language, shall not have goods or chattels sufficient and overt within this Province to be taken to satisfy the penalty aforesaid, or that the same be not otherwise speedily satisfied, that then the person and persons so offending shall be publicly whipt, and shall suffer imprisonment without Bail or Mainprife untill he, she, or they, respectively, shall satisfy the party offended or grieved by such reproachfull Language, by asking him or her respectively forgiveness publicly, for such his offence, before the Magistrate or chief Officer or Officers of the Town or place where such offence shall be given.

And be further likewise enacted by the authority and consent aforesaid, that every person and persons within this Province, that shall at any time hereafter prophane the Sabbath, or Lords day, called Sunday, by frequent swearing, drunkenness, or by any uncivil or disorderly Recreation, or by working on that day when absolute necessity doth not require, shall for every such first offence forfeit two shillings six pence Sterling, or the value thereof; and for the second offence five shillings Sterling, or the value thereof; and for the third offence, and for every time he shall offend in like manner afterwards, Ten shillings Sterling, or the value thereof; and in case such offender or offenders shall not have sufficient goods or chattels within this Province to satisfy any of the aforesaid penalties respectively hereby imposed for prophaning the Sabbath or Lords day called Sunday as aforesaid, then in every such case the party so offending shall for the first and second offence in that kind be imprisoned till he or she shall publicly in open Court before the chief Commander, Judge or Magistrate of that County, Town, or Precinct wherein such offence shall be committed, acknowledge the scandal and offence he hath in that respect given, against God, and the good and civil Government of this Province: and for the third offence and for every time after shall also be publicly whipt.

And whereas the enforcing of the Conscience in matter of Religion hath frequently fallen out to be of dangerous consequence in those Commonwealths where it hath been practised, and for the more quiet and peaceable Government of this Province, and the better to preserve mutual love & unity amongst the Inhabitants here, Be it therefore also by the Lord Proprietary with the advice and assent of this Assembly, ordained and enacted, except as in this present Act is before declared and set forth, that no person or persons whatsoever within this Province, or the Islands, Ports, Harbors, Creeks, or Havens thereunto belonging, professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth be any ways troubled, molested, or discountenanced, for, or in respect of his or her Religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province or the Islands thereunto belonging, nor any way compell'd to the belief or exercise of any other Religion, against his or her consent, so as they be not unfaithfull to the Lord Proprietary, or molest or conspire against the civil Government, established or to be established in this Province under him and his Heirs. And that all and every person and persons that shall presume contrary to this Act and the true intent & meaning thereof, directly or indirectly, either in person or estate, willfully to wrong, disturb, or trouble, or molest any person or persons whatsoever within this Province, professing to be believe in Jesus Christ, for or in respect of his or her Religion, or the free exercise thereof within this Province, otherwise then is provided for in this Act, that such person or persons so offending shall be compelled to pay treble damages to the party so wronged or molested, and for every such offence shall also forfeit Twenty shillings Sterling in Money, or the value thereof, half thereof for the use of the Lord Proprietary and his Heirs, Lords and Proprietaries of this Province, and the other half thereof for the use of the Party so wronged or molested as aforesaid; or if the party so offending as aforesaid, shall refuse or be unable to recompence the party so wronged, or to satisfy such fine or forfeiture, then such offender shall be severely punished by publick whipping and imprisonment during the pleasure of the Lord Proprietary or his Lieutenant or chief Governor of this Province for the time being, without Bail or Mainprife.

And be it further also enacted by the authority and consent aforesaid, that the Sheriff or other Officer or Officers from time to time to be appointed and authorized for that purpose of the County, Town, or Precinct where every particular offence in this present Act contained, shall happen at any time to be committed, and whereupon there is hereby a forfeiture, fine, or penalty imposed, shall from time to time distrain, and seize the goods and estate of every such person so offending as aforesaid against this present Act or any part thereof, and sell the same or any part thereof for the full satisfaction of such forfeiture, fine, or penalty as aforesaid, restoring to the party so offending, the remainder or over plus of the said goods or estate, after such satisfaction so made as aforesaid.