



The Linden Times

A bi-weekly newsletter for the members & friends of the Calvert County Historical Society – May 25, 2020



The first Act of Supremacy was issued by King Henry VIII on November 3, 1534 declaring the King to be "the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England" in place of the Pope. King Henry VIII designated the Church of England, as the established religion. Catholics were hampered and punished in practicing their religion. While there were no burnings for heresy, life was made difficult and expensive for Catholics in England. Catholics could not hold public office or government associated jobs, as they would not take the required oath of supremacy to the King, renouncing the Pope. They were not allowed to hear Mass and they were fined £20 for not attending Church of England services. They were fined £20 for not taking communion on important feast days. A huge amount considering a single pound was what the average person earned in a year. For a second offense you could be publicly flogged and for a third, you were considered treasonous and could be punished by life imprisonment.

Father Andrew White was an English Jesuit missionary who was involved in the founding of the Maryland colony. Born in London in 1579, he began his formal education at age 14 when he entered the English College in Douai, France. He entered English College of St. Alban's in Valladolid, Spain, in 1595 at the same time as other notable English Catholic priests, including the later Saint and martyr Thomas Garnet. He sought further education in Seville, and was ordained at Douai in 1605, after which he returned to England.

Meanwhile back in England religious problems were continuing to be fueled by strong anti-Catholicism in England including the Gunpowder Plot of November 5, 1605, in which Guy Fawkes and other Catholic conspirators were found guilty of planning to blow up the English Parliament and England's King James I in an effort to end the persecution of Roman Catholics by the English government.



Father Andrew White

Father White risked a cruel death during this period of renewed Catholic persecution by becoming a missionary to Protestant England. Caught up in a wave of anti-Catholic arrests following the Gunpowder Plot, he was arrested and in 1606, banished from England. In 1607 he joined the Society of Jesus. Despite the threat of capital punishment, White returned in 1609 to preach in Southern England.

By the late 1620s or early 1630s, Father White was advising Sir George Calvert, the first

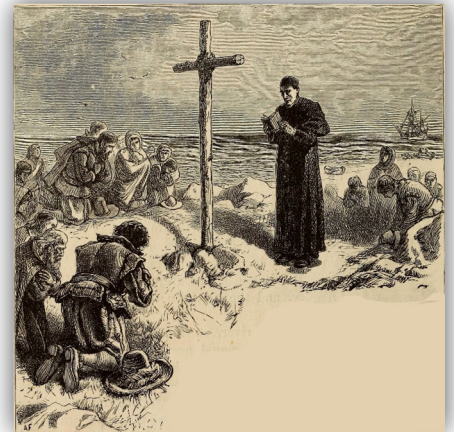
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Baron of Baltimore and later his son, Cecil Calvert about the colonization of America. On November 22, 1633, he accompanied the first colonists to Maryland as the superior of the Jesuit mission. He was a chronicler of the early colony, and his writings are a primary source on the land, the Native Americans of the area, and the Jesuit mission in North America. For his efforts in converting and educating the native population, he is frequently referred to as the "Apostle of Maryland." He is considered a forefather of Georgetown University, and is memorialized in the name of its White-Gravenor building, a central location of offices and classrooms on the university's campus.

Nearly 100 years after the First Acts of Supremacy was issued in England, Father White celebrated the first Catholic Mass in English America on March 25, 1634, and for the next decade labored to convert Indians and colonists alike. He wrote one of the most valuable and famous accounts of early Maryland and composed a grammar, dictionary, and catechism in the local Algonquian dialect.

When Richard Ingle invaded Maryland during the English Civil War (1642-1651), his missionary work was cut short. Father White, then 66, was transported back to England in chains and remained in Newgate prison until January 1648. Once there he was tried for the crime of returning to England after being banished in 1606, which carried the punishment of death. He escaped this fate by arguing that his return was not of his own will. His petitions to return to Maryland denied, he spent the last decade of his life quietly in England until his death on December 27, 1656.



'The Priest as Physician.' Father White Ministering to the King of the Piscataways.

The first colonies fled religious persecution seeking to establish Maryland as a haven for Roman Catholics persecuted in England. In framing the laws of the New World, Lord Baltimore determined that no preference should be given to any sect. It became an asylum for Papists, but equality in religious rights and civil freedom were assured to all. Religious liberty was the basis adopted by the governor of Maryland. *"I will not,"* said he in his oath, *"by myself or any other, directly or indirectly, molest any person professing to believe in Jesus Christ, for or in respect of religion"*. Long before the First Amendment was adopted, the assembly of the Province of Maryland passed "An Act Concerning Religion," also called the Maryland Toleration Act of 1649. The act was meant to ensure freedom of religion for Christian settlers of diverse persuasions in the colony. This law appears to have been the first in America to specifically refer to "the free exercise" of religion, the term later used to protect religious freedom in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

"We hold it for a fundamental and inalienable truth that religion and the manner of discharging it can be directed only by reason and conviction not by force and violence. The religion, then, of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate."

James Monroe, Address to the Virginia General Assembly, June 20, 1785