

freedom, with settlers fleeing religious persecution coming here not only from Europe but from other American colonies where these liberties were restricted. Dissenting sects from Virginia moved into the lower Eastern Shore as the first settlers of that area of our State. Quakers, Presbyterians and others lived there in harmony under the tolerant authority of the Lords Baltimore. Political upheavals in the mother country reverberated in the American colonies, with the result that religious freedom suffered badly during the years preceding the American Revolution. We recall, with some measure of shame, that Charles Carroll of Carrollton because of his religion was not eligible to vote in Maryland when he signed the Declaration of Independence.

But these rather dismal decades of our history, insofar as religious tolerance is concerned, cannot blot out the glorious epoch. Nor were subsequent restrictive acts ever able to blot out the spirit of the Act of Toleration which was firmly implanted in the mind and habits of the people of Maryland. With such a history and such a background, it was easy for Marylanders to write a clause granting freedom of conscience in the first State Constitution they adopted after political freedom had been gained.

We see, then, a strong strain of religious motivations in the settlement of the North American continent. Religion truly gave birth to the Anglo-American society which was established here. But from the very earliest times, as, for example, the era of the first Calverts in Maryland, religious institutions remained distinct from political institutions. As a result, it was easy enough, when the time came, for the Americans to overthrow their government—"to dissolve," as they said in the Declaration of Independence, "the political bands which have connected them with another" and "to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them" But the religious beliefs, which, as we have seen, had become intermingled with their habits and feelings, remained unshaken in all this upheaval. Their religious institutions, in fact, remained intact save for superficial and unessential form.

So much, then, for the effect of religion on the foundations of our country. It is clear that religion has deeply affected the complexion of our society and consequently the lives of all the individuals who have comprised it. With such a heritage, it is unthinkable that religion ever would decline as a vital force in our nation. I predict that as long as this republic stands, its citizens will continue to be guided by the moral and religious precepts of their forefathers.