

George Calvert

The Maryland charter was largely the work of Cecil Calvert's father, George Calvert (1580-1632), the first Lord Baltimore, whose career was a seventeenth-century success story. He was the oldest son of Leonard Calvert, an obscure gentleman of small means in Kiplin, Yorkshire. Leonard Calvert was a Catholic when George was born and the family was subjected to the harassments of English laws that tried to force conformity to the Church of England on every Englishman. George's father eventually submitted, although his second wife, George's stepmother, probably never did. George received a Protestant gentleman's education at Oxford followed by a tour of Europe after he had completed his degree in 1597. About this time he met Sir Robert Cecil, a member of Queen Elizabeth's privy council, and evidently made the most of this opportunity. In 1603 Cecil took the young man into his personal service. This patronage set Calvert on the road to office and power, and he showed his gratitude when he named his eldest son and heir, Cecil, after his benefactor. In 1617 James I knighted Calvert in recognition of his excellent service and in 1619 appointed him as one of his principal secretaries of state. George Calvert, who had begun his career with little fortune or family prominence, had used a good education and excellent abilities to become a personage of great importance, with the wealth that accompanied major office.¹

George Calvert's Preparation for Establishing Maryland

Calvert's work in the royal bureaucracy offered him many opportunities to observe and participate in trading and colonizing ventures. It was a time of major