

Maryland Toleration Act of 1649

Group #1:

Original Version

“That whatever person or persons within this Province and the Islands belonging to it shall from henceforth (now on) blaspheme God, or deny that our Savior Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or shall deny that the holy Trinity is the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or shall use or utter any reproachful speeches, words, or language concerning the said Holy Trinity, or any of the said three persons thereof, shall be punished with death, and all his or her lands and goods will be given to the Lord Proprietary and his heirs.”

Modern Version

That if any person who lives within Maryland and the islands belonging to Maryland curses God or denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or denies that the Holy Trinity is the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or says any mean things about the Holy Trinity or the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall be punished with death, and all his or her land and property will be given to Lord Baltimore and his future children.

Question:

1. What does the *Maryland Act of Toleration* say you can not do if you live in the colony of Maryland?

2. What happened to you if you did not follow these rules?

3. Why do you think the rules were so strict?

Maryland Toleration Act of 1649

Group #2:

Original Version

“And be it also enacted by the Authority of the Right Honorable Cecil Calvert, Lord Baron of Baltimore, that whatever person or persons shall from now on use or utter any reproachful words or speeches concerning the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of our Savior, or the holy Apostles, or Evangelists, shall on the first offence owe to the said Lord Baltimore and his heirs, lords, and Proprietaries of this Province the sum of five pound Sterling or the value thereof to be taken from the property of every such person so offending. In the case of an offender not having property worth enough to pay the fine, or if the offender does not pay it speedily enough, then such offender or offenders shall be publicly whipped and be imprisoned during the pleasure of the Lord Proprietor (as long as the Lord Proprietor decides).”

Modern Version

According to the laws created by Cecil Calvert, Lord Baron of Baltimore, the person or persons who criticizes the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ, or the holy Apostles, or the Evangelists, shall on the first offence owe 5 pounds of Sterling (British money) to Lord Baltimore and his children, and the lords, and landowners of the Maryland colony. If the person does not have enough money to pay the fine, he or she will be publicly whipped and imprisoned for as long as the governor of the colony decides.

Question:

1. According to the laws of the Maryland colony, what are you not permitted to say and do?

2. What happened to you if you did not follow these rules?

3. Why do you think the rules were so strict?

Maryland Toleration Act of 1649

Group #3:

Original Version

“...whatever person or persons shall from now on declare or call any person or persons who are living, traveling, trading, or working within this Province or within any of its ports, or waterways a heretic, Schismatic, Idolater, puritan, Independent, Presbyterian, popish priest, Jesuit, Jesuit papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, Brownist, Antinomian, Barrowist, Roundhead, Separatist, or any other name in a negative manner relating to Religion shall for every such offence pay a fine of ten shillings sterling...But if the person spoke the reproachful words or language shall not have enough money of property to pay the penalty, or does not pay it speedily enough, then that person or persons shall be publicly whipped, and shall suffer imprisonment without bail until he, she or they respectively publicly apologize in front of a magistrate to the person they offended.”

Modern Version

Anybody who calls a person who is living, traveling, trading, or working within the Maryland colony or within any of its ports or waterways such names as Heretic, Schismatic, Idolater, Puritan, Independent, Presbyterian, Popish Priest, Jesuit, Jesuit Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, Brownist, Antinomian, Barrowist, Roundhead, Separatist, or any other negative name relating to religion, shall pay a fine of ten shillings sterling (British money) for every offense...But if the person does not have enough money to pay the fine, he or she will be publicly whipped, and shall be put in prison without bail until he or she publicly apologizes to the person they offended in front of a colonial official.

Question:

1. According to this excerpt, people were forbidden to call people living or working in Maryland offensive names. What were some of these names?

2. What happened to you if you did not follow these rules?

3. Why do you think the rules were so strict?
