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# *The beginnings of the Catholic Church in the English colonies in North America*

**Abstract:** The article presents the origins of the Catholic Church in the English colonies of North America, with particular emphasis on Newfoundland, Baltimore and the state of Maryland. The article presents the enormous influence of Catholics on the formation of the American tradition of religious tolerance, which was then somehow incorporated by the Founding Fathers of the United States.

**Keywords:** Catholicism in the USA, the United States, religious tolerance, religious freedom

**Abstrakt:** W artykule zostały przedstawione początki Kościoła katolickiego w angielskich koloniach Ameryki Północnej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Nowej Funlandii, Baltimore oraz stanu Maryland. W artykule został przedstawiony ogromny wpływ katolików na wykształcenie się amerykańskiej tradycji tolerancji religijnej, która następnie została niejako wcielona przez Ojców Założycieli Stanów Zjednoczonych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** katolicyzm w USA, Stany Zjednoczone, tolerancja religijna, wolność religijna

Today, Catholicism is one of the most numerous Christian denominations in the United States, and its spread was determined by immigrants from Italy, Ireland, Poland, Germany, and by the influx and growth of the Spanish-speaking population from Mexico and other Latin American countries, mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although successive waves of Catholics coming to the US brought their own spirituality and customs related to the profession of the Catholic faith, these newcomers blended to a large extent into the Catholic community

formed earlier, back in colonial times. This was mainly because the newcomers joined the lower ranks of the social hierarchy of the emerging American society linked by the common use of the English language and practical Anglo-Saxon culture, in which Protestant customs dominated. It is no coincidence that, until recently, the American social elite was referred to as "WASP", meaning *White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant*. It is also no coincidence that the first and – until the 2020 elections, the only – Catholic President of the United States was John F. Kennedy. Contemporary American Catholic spirituality was shaped under the strong influence of the Protestant environment and in juxtaposition with that environment. What is important, and what differed from the European tradition, where the Catholic Church often defended the social *status quo* against "libertarian novelties", in this confrontation the American Catholic Church during the colonial times was on the side of the right to religious freedom because in the Anglo-Saxon environment it was an oppressed minority.

The discovery of North America and its subsequent conquest by the Spanish had, among others, a religious purpose. From the beginning, Columbus wondered how to convert the Indians to Catholicism [Morison 1942: 204]. The violence and abuse of the cross for political purposes that soon followed, as well as the speeches of Spanish priests and friars, such as Father Antonio de Montesinos or Father Bartolomeo de las Casas, who defended the rights of the Indians, prompted Pope Paul III in 1537 to write the bull "*Sublimus Deus*", in which he stated: "Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; (…) should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect" [Sublimus Deus].

From the very beginning as well, Catholic priests died at the hands of the Indians. The first Christian martyr on today's territory of the United States was a Franciscan, Father Juan de Padilla, who died on the plains of Kansas in 1542 at the hands of the Wichita Indians [Ellis 1955: 5]. While Spanish Catholics colonized the Gulf Coast, French Catholics began colonizing Canada and the northern regions of the present-day United States. There, French missionaries, mainly Jesuits, followed the fleet and the merchants. Father Jean de Brébeuf lived with the Huron (Wyandot people) for almost three years to learn their language and customs. He concluded that the prospects for the Christianization of this tribe were slim. All the time he had an impression of "casting pearls before swine"

[Ellis 1955: 11]. Nevertheless, he continued his mission for twelve years until he fell into the hands of the Iroquois, who tortured him in a terrible way and killed him at Georgian Bay in 1649 [Parkman 1910b: 213-214]. Father Brébeuf was no exception. Three years earlier, the same Iroquois had tortured to death Father Isaac Jogues near Auriesville, New York, and in March 1649, on Georgian Bay, the Iroquois also killed Father Gabriel Lalemant. The cause of these massacres was probably more the Iroquois' hatred of the Huron and their friends than hatred of Christianity [Ellis 1955: 12-13]. In 1675, Father Jacques Marquette was killed on Lake Michigan, where the river now bearing his name flows into it [Parkman 1910a: 59 nn]. In territories explored by the Spaniards in the south and the French in the north, Catholicism was the main Christian denomination.

This started to change when in 1607 the first English colony was established in Jamestown, and then the English began to appear on the coast from Maine to Georgia. The situation of Catholics in the New World was influenced from the beginning by their situation in England. The first decades of the 17th century were a period of growing internal problems in England. After the childless death of Elizabeth I, who had held the country in an iron grip, cruelly persecuting Catholics, James I, son of Mary Stuart and king of Scotland, ascended the English throne in July 1603, which cemented England and Scotland with a personal union. James Stuart was an Anglican, but a man lacking the virtues of an effective ruler.[1] Marking the new king's nervous reaction to the "Gunpowder Plot", i.e. an attempt to blow up the parliament and the king by Catholic conspirators, in November 1605 an extremely strict anti-Catholic law (Popish Recusants Act) was passed in England, prohibiting "papist recusants" (i.e. Catholics) from finding themselves closer than ten miles from London and five miles from their place of residence [National Archives]. Therefore, it is not surprising that, from the beginning, anti-Catholic bias prevailed in the thirteen colonies that later became part of the United States. An example

[1] From the time of his difficult childhood, James Stuart was fearful and emotionally unstable, and he covered his uncertainty with verbosity, buffoonery, and sometimes cruelty. It was said that in place of the masculine woman, the English had brought a feminine man to the throne. The stability of his rule was not strengthened by the Catholic "Gunpowder Plot" of 1605, nor by the pressure by Puritans or Presbyterians who wanted to impose more discipline and harsh radicalism on the English Church. Meanwhile, James's court was quite a frivolous arena of intrigues and scandals. The king's first moves, such as peace with Spain, postponement of parliamentary meetings, or a rather special relationship with the favoured George Villier, appointed Lord of Buckingham, aroused resistance among the aristocracy [Maurois 1938: 323-337].

of such prejudices can be the later anti-Catholic laws, passed during the time of the English civil wars in Virginia (1642) or Massachusetts (1645) [Ellis 1955: 19].

Thus, in the territory of the future United States, Catholics were the pioneers of religious tolerance. Paradoxically, it was George Calvert (1580-1632), initially a zealous Anglican, who contributed greatly to Catholics winning religious freedom.[2] In 1613, James I appointed him as one of royal commissioners to investigate the influence of Catholicism in Ireland. Calvert's commission's conclusions were quite harsh: the report stated that pressure on the Catholic clergy should be intensified and disobedient priests should be relegated. Calvert became an important figure at court: he could afford to build the Kiplin Hall Palace in the family estate. In 1617, he was awarded a knighthood, and two years later he was also appointed as the king's secretary of state. In 1623, James gifted Calvert a large estate in Longford County, Leinster, Ireland. Probably at the end of 1624, Calvert converted to Catholicism, which made his further political career in England difficult. He then thought about greater involvement in the colonization of the New World. As early as 1620, he acquired a property in Newfoundland, which he named Avalon to commemorate the place where Christian missionaries first appeared in Britain in the Middle Ages. The settlement, populated by a group of Welsh, led by Captain Edward Wynne sent there by Calvert, initially prospered quite well, so in 1623 Calvert obtained a concession from king James for the whole of Newfoundland. Calvert now ran remotely the "Avalon Province" located thousands of miles from the metropolis, as "Baron Baltimore". His conversion to Catholicism apparently did not bother James, who, moreover, fell into dementia by the end of his reign.

After the death of King James in March 1625, his son Charles I Stuart could not find a common language with the parliament, not least because shortly after his

[2] George Calvert came from a modest family in Yorkshire, a county where Catholicism was still fairly strong despite Elizabethan persecutions. Therefore, George's father, Leonard, was subjected to fierce pressure to raise his son in the spirit of Anglicanism and obedience to the throne. George graduated from Trinity College at Oxford, which was associated with paying tribute to Queen Elizabeth. After completion of his studies in municipal law at London's Lincoln Inn, in 1604 he married Anne Mayne in the Anglican rite. They named their eldest son Cecilius after Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, who was the main defeater of the "Gunpowder Plot". Young Calvert's close ties with Cecil, who at that time was the secretary of state and Lord Treasurer of King James, resulted in George Calvert's rapid career [Browne 1890: 1-26; see *NCoAB*: 331].

coronation, in June 1625 he married Henrietta Marie de Bourbon, daughter of King Henry IV of France, a Catholic. While Charles declared that the Queen would have freedom of confession only alone with her court, in a confidential clause in the marriage contract, he committed to protect Catholics. In addition, he continued the extravagant life of his father, plunging England into the enormous costs of maintaining the court. All this made his religious policy inconsistent [Maurois 1995: 170 nn.].

Meanwhile, in May 1625, Calvert set sail for America. His first visit to the Avalon colony in Newfoundland did not make him too optimistic: apart from hunting and fishing, the agricultural prospects there looked bleak due to the harsh climate. Moreover, the Newfoundland colony was exposed to pressure from French fishermen and colonizers. He returned to England, but the deteriorating political climate there prompted him in 1628 to take his second wife and most of the children, along with 40 new colonists to the New World. Meanwhile, one of the Avalon colonists, a Puritan, reported to the king that Calvert favoured Catholics. The harsh winter strained both the health and patience of Calvert and his wife. He wrote to Charles about his difficult experiences, but the king's response reached Calvert only after he left for Virginia. In his letter, the king urged him to return to England. It is not known how Calvert would react to this call. He might have feared disfavour, but he made the decision to leave for Virginia without knowing the king's summons. Calvert arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in October 1629 [Browne1890: 20-27].

The colony in Jamestown was established 22 years earlier. In May 1607, three ships owned by the private Virginia Company from London – the Discover, the Goodspeed, and the Sarah Constant – reached the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The commander of the 143-person expedition, Captain Christopher Newport, led the flotilla 30 miles up the James River, named after the King of England, and established a settlement there. The land was fertile, the vegetation was abundant, the climate was friendly, and the natives did not cause difficulties at first. Unfortunately, the colonists were not prepared for hard work and the leaders undertook wrong decisions. The colony was built near salt marshes, which almost led to disaster. In the winter of 1609/1610, many settlers died of starvation, and one of them committed an act of cannibalism by killing and eating his wife. In May 1610, the remaining 60 persons intended to return to England, but the arrival of two more ships, including the colony governor

Thomas Gates, dissuaded them from this intention. Despite the difficult conditions, the colony survived.[3]

After arriving in Jamestown, Calvert was met with unfavourable reception by the colonists, one of whom was even eager to beat Baron Baltimore. The colonists quickly realized the religion he followed and demanded that he take the oath on the Act of Supremacy, which he refused. In this situation, he had no choice but to look for a new place to settle. Anyway, he had had such intention even earlier, somewhat expecting that the Jamestown colonists would not be pleased with his Catholicism. After a few weeks in Jamestown, Calvert returned to England to attempt to obtain a royal charter for a new colony in the Chesapeake Bay area. On the way back, his ship crashed off the coast of Ireland, his second wife drowned in the crash, and he lost a large part of his property. Calvert's attempts to obtain the royal charter were hampered by Virginians from Jamestown and surrounding areas, acting on behalf of the Virginia Company. One of their leaders, William Clairborne, came to England with claims to exclusive colonization of the mouths of the James, York, Rappahanock, and Potomac rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Eventually, King Charles granted Calvert a charter to colonize both sides of the bay, but before the charter's parliamentary approval, Calvert died on 15 April 1632 [Browne 1890: 28-31].

[3] Tobacco cultivation began around Jamestown. Its precursor was one of the first settlers, John Rolfe, who in 1614 married Pocahontas, the daughter of the Powhatan chief. Tobacco became a regular and reliable source of income for Virginia, a colony named so after the "virgin" Queen Elizabeth I. In 1619, the first legislative council of the colony was established. However, the life of the colonists was still extremely hard. In the years 1622-1623, an epidemic claimed about 500 victims. In 1624, about 1,200 colonists lived in Virginia, out of around 4,000 who had come successively from across the ocean. Although the Indians were initially friendly, aiding the colonists with food and advice, they gradually became aware that the "whites" wanted to stay permanently and that their numbers were constantly growing. More and more clashes occurred, in which the colonists' weapons proved to be more effective. Most of the Indian settlements lay in ruins, and the Powhatan chief led increasingly hopeless raids, probably regretting the help initially provided to the settlers. In March 1624, as a result of an unexpected attack by the Indians led by Opechancanough, around 400 colonists were killed. In the same year, the statutes of the Virginia Company were revoked and the colony came under the full jurisdiction of the King of England. Not much is known about Catholics in Jamestown. It is true that on 1 October 1608, five Poles – Michał Łowicki, Zbigniew Stefański, Jan Bogdan, Jan Mata and Stanisław Sadowski – arrived in Jamestown on the ship "Mary and Margaret", and launched glassworks, and tar and pitch manufactures there, but we know nothing about their religious practices [HC 1845: 135-135; Smith 1999: 1-12].

Although George Calvert did not live to see the establishment of a colony in which Catholics would enjoy tolerance, his son Cecilius Calvert (1605-1675) received a royal charter dated 20 June 1632 as Second Baron Baltimore. The official name of the new colony was Maryland (*Terra Mariae*) in honour of King Charles's Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria. The name was also symbolic for Catholics, as Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was not particularly revered by Protestants. The seat of the colony's authorities was the settlement on the north shore of the Potomac River named St. Mary's City, and the area around that settlement was named Augusta Carolina in honour of the king. The northern border of the colony was the 40th parallel, and the southern one – mainly the Potomac River. Maryland was a kind of a fief of the king, obligated to provide the crown with a fifth of the obtained gold and silver, and two Indian arrows. However, the main source of income for the colonists was not gold or silver, but the cultivation of tobacco. The royal charter defined the status of the colony as the property of Cecilius Calvert, giving him the power to appoint judges and other officials, as well as to grant land, and to set duties and taxes. The only limitation to Calvert's power was his pledge to the establishment of an assembly of free citizens, which became the seed of anti-Catholic opposition. The first settlers landed on 25 March 1634 on St. Clement Island off the northern shore of the Potomac, led by Cecilius's younger brother Leonard Calvert (1606-1647) as the colony's governor. Cecilius Calvert remained in England. Two days after landing, the colonists settled just below the mouth of the river to the sea, on the site of the village of the Yaocomico Indians of the Piskatawai group, and began to build St. Mary's City as the seat of the colony's government [NCoAB: 331-332; Browne 1890: 35-36; Rozbicki 1995: 66-68].

Among the first colonists in St. Mary's City were two English Jesuits, Andrew White (1579-1656) and John Altham (1589-1640). At the landing site, Father White celebrated the first Catholic Mass in the English colonies. Over the following ten years, Father White worked effectively to establish and maintain good relations between the colonists and the indigenous Indians, and led the latter's intense evangelization. In 1640, he succeeded in converting a Piscatawai chief named Chitomachon, and shortly thereafter – a Patuxent princess and most of her people, hence earning himself the name of "Apostle of Maryland". Father White was assisted in the pastoral work by his confrere, Father John Altham of Warwickshire (1589-1640), who fitted up an Indian hut for religious service, which became known as "the first chapel in Maryland". In 1637, two more Jesuits arrived: Thomas Copley (1596-1652) and Ferdinand Poulton (1601-1641). Some Protestants who, in search of religious freedom, fled to Maryland from harassment inflicted

by competing Protestant denominations, also turned out to be allies in creating tolerant foundations of the Maryland colony [Shea 1886: 40].

The first legal act to guarantee religious freedom in Maryland was the ordinance of 1639, which guaranteed religious rights without listing specific denominations. The "Holy Church" mentioned in the ordinance meant the Catholic Church. Leonard Calvert was able to push through this act thanks to the support of two influential settlers, Catholics Jerome Hawley and Thomas Cornwaleys. Although other Catholic settlers also ardently supported the Jesuits' evangelization campaign, the status of land grants presented a problem, as there was a dispute over whether governor Calvert had the right to grant land on his own terms, or under the terms of the English law. As regards church property, the matter was even more difficult, since Protestants prevailed in England. On both issues, Maryland's Protestants were not as obedient to Calvert as the Catholics were [Browne 1890: 101-116].

The Maryland experiment was born while the Thirty Years' War was raging in continental Europe and the revolution and civil war began in England. It is difficult to say how Cecilius Calvert maintained the position of Baron Baltimore during this turbulent period, especially since the family of his wife, Anne Arundel, who died in 1639, sided with King Charles. In April 1643, Leonard Calvert arrived in England, leaving his brother-in-law, Catholic Giles Brent, in Maryland as his deputy. The Calvert brothers managed to maintain their position in England, but at the cost of events in the colony. In 1644, a group of Virginia Protestants led by Richard Ingle and William Claiborne took St. Mary's City by force and burned down the settlement, by then numbering several hundred inhabitants. Fathers White and Copley were sent to England in chains. Since Father White argued that he had broken the royal banishment, issued almost 40 years earlier, against his will, he was spared. Father Copley even managed to return to Maryland in 1648, but he died there shortly afterwards [Shea 1886: 42ff].

After returning from England, Maryland Governor Leonard Calvert was able to restore his authority with the help of mercenaries from Virginia, but he died on 9 June 1647. On his deathbed, he handed over his power to the Catholic and royalist Thomas Greene, and he named as the executrix of his will his sister-in-law Margaret Brent (1601-1671), a person of great merit in the history of the colony.[4]

[4] Due to her role in the life of the colony, Margaret Brent is considered a leading figure in Maryland history. She was a daughter of Richard Brent, Lord Admington and Lark Stoke, one of his thirteen children. After one of her sisters converted to Catholicism, some siblings

However, local Anglicans, supporting the English parliament in the struggle against the king, took control of the Maryland colony. The Second Baron Baltimore, Cecilius Calvert, residing in England, managed to maintain power over the colony thanks to the support of a group of Puritans who were ill-disposed towards Anglicans, but only by dint of the concession of agreeing to remove Greene and the appointment of William Stone, close to parliament, as the new colony governor. As a result, on 21 April 1649, the colony assembly passed the "Maryland Toleration Act". This Act guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion to all residents of the colony, on the condition that they professed Trinitarian Christianity, and provided for severe penalties for discrimination and mockery of religious beliefs [Browne 1890: 128nn; Maryland Toleration Act].

Meanwhile, King Charles was removed in England. He was sentenced to death on 27 January 1649 and executed three days later opposite Whitehall in London. Maryland's first Protestant governor, Stone, complied with the 1649 Act, but in his absence, his deputy Greene who held power temporarily, proclaimed the son of the murdered king, Charles II Stuart, as king. Although Scotland stood behind him, Greene's move in the colony was sheer insanity, for it only reinforced the arguments of Anglicans and Puritans that Maryland was a hotbed of "papists". When Stone returned, he immediately removed Greene from office. Since the influx of Anglicans into the colony was faster than that of the Catholics, and the revolution and persecution of Catholics by Oliver Cromwell was raging in the homeland, the Calvert experiment collapsed in 1654 when, under pressure from a group of Puritans, the Maryland colony assembly repealed the Toleration Act. Cromwell's two commissioners, William Clairborne and George Bennett, removed Stone and forced upon the colony the power of Capt. William Fuller, who called a new assembly, this time without any Catholics. However, because they overstepped the mandate by Cromwell, whose intention was not to aggravate the conflict, fights erupted between Stone's supporters and Catholics on the one hand, and Puritans on the other. Having come to power, Puritans led to the persecution of Catholics. Ten persons were sentenced to death, and four were actually executed

followed in her footsteps and left for America. In November 1638, Margaret landed with her sister Mary and brothers Giles and Fulke in St. Mary's City. In October 1639, Margaret received a land grant as the first female settler. Margaret and her sister henceforth managed 70 acres of land named "Sisters' Freehold" and 50 adjacent acres named "St. Andrews". Soon thereafter, their estate expanded to 800 acres; Mary married Governor Leonard Calvert, her brother Giles married Mary Kittamaquund, daughter of the late Piscataway chieftain, and inherited the land rights of the tribe. On his death, Leonard Calvert entrusted her with the execution of his will, saying: "Take all, spend all". During the later struggles for power in the colony, she withdrew from politics [Winifred 1977: 43-46].

for religious reasons. Cromwell's death in 1658 and the restoration of the Stuarts two years later saved the status of the Maryland colony as a kind of Calvert fief, but Protestants dominated the colony in numbers [Browne 1890: 137-165].

Religious freedom in the American colonies was introduced by King Charles II, who in 1672 converted to Catholicism. However, Cecilius Calvert died in England on 30 November 1675. He was succeeded as the Third Baron Baltimore by his son Charles (1637-1715), who arrived in the colony of Maryland in 1661. After the restoration of the monarchy, Calvert was able to take the position of governor of the province he officially owned, but the beginning of his reign brought, apart from a certain stabilization of religious relations, also economic problems related to the decrease of the prices of tobacco. Calvert managed to maintain the principles of religious tolerance as he had a Catholic majority on his council. Some of the council members were also related to the Calverts. The problems stemmed mainly from whether the rules of English law were to be applied in the colony, or the rules followed by the governor and, from 1675, the owner. Fearing a loss of control over the colony, Calvert tried to restrict the right to vote to persons holding more than 50 acres of land. There were also conflicts related to slavery. The first 13 slaves were brought to Maryland in 1642. Initially, those who were baptized were given freedom, but in 1663 the colony assembly passed the measure to introduce the lifetime status of slaves, who, moreover, began to be brought to the colony on a larger scale in the 1790s, after Calvert had already lost control of the colony. In 1675, after the death of his father, Charles Calvert came to London to take on the title of baron of Baltimore, which he still managed to do despite the fact that his enemies, incited from overseas, accused him of the lack of Anglican worship, and thus of the tragic moral condition of the colonists. After his return to the colony, in 1681, Calvert had to crush another Protestant conspiracy, led by former governor Josiah Fendall and John Coode, and face the claims of the Quakers who, under William Penn, wanted to build their capital south of the 40$^{th}$ parallel, in the territory of Maryland. In 1684, Calvert travelled to England again in order to defend his interests against the Quakers and against accusations that he favoured Catholics. He left his nephew George Talbot to act as governor, who, however, soon gained notoriety for killing a customs officer on an English ship. In his place, Calvert appointed another Catholic, William Joseph, who aroused displeasure of Protestants with his statements about their poor moral conduct [Brugger 1988: 22-36].

In 1688, the successor of Charles II, the Catholic King James II, was removed, and Protestant William of Orange took the throne as a result of a coup led by parliament,

called the "Glorious revolution". Calvert hastened to acknowledge the new king, but the messenger bearing this news died on his way to America. In this situation, Anglicans in Maryland overthrew Governor Joseph from power. In the summer of 1689, the Puritan army of 700 soldiers under the command of John Coode defeated the troops loyal to Baron Baltimore led by Catholic Colonel Henry Darnall. Darnall's surrender marked the end of religious freedom in Maryland. Coode established a new colony government, which outlawed Catholicism. The faithful of the Roman rite now had to confine themselves to worship at home. In 1704, a law was passed that prohibited Catholics from holding office in the colony. Charles Calvert never returned to his former estate, and in 1689 King William revoked the royal grant. In 1692, one year after Maryland became a fully royal colony, the Church of England was recognized as the ruling church there. Catholics were henceforth forced to pay taxes to the church that fought against them [Ellis 1955: 27; Brugger 1988: 37-40].

Catholics in Maryland found themselves in an unenviable situation. In 1765, there were only 10,000 Catholics in Maryland, and a further 3,000 lived in Pennsylvania, as some Maryland Catholics moved north, where Quaker leader William Penn began another experiment with religious freedom in 1681. The tolerant Quakers only temporarily, in 1705, bowed to the pressure from London, but throughout the eighteenth century Catholics enjoyed the greatest freedom in Pennsylvania. English, and especially German, Jesuits set up missions there, and the city Catholic parishes around Goshenhoppen and Lancaster developed unhindered [Kashatus 2011].

Thanks to religious tolerance introduced by Charles II, Catholics gained more freedom in other colonies as well. Charles allowed people of all faiths to settle around New Amsterdam, which had been turned from a Dutch colony to an English one. In 1682, the governorship of the New York colony was taken on by a Catholic, Colonel Thomas Dongan, who brought three Jesuits to the colony. Dongan took over the colony's government that was in very poor condition, but got the situation under control, and on 14 October 1683, he convened the first ever assembly of colony's representatives at Fort James, which passed guarantees of religious freedom under the name of the "Charter of Liberties".[5] Again, however,

[5] Thomas Dongan (1634-1715) was born in a Catholic family in Ireland's Kildare county. His family, supporter of the Stuarts in the civil war, fled to France after the overthrow of Charles I, although it maintained the estate in Ireland. Thomas served in France in the Irish regiment of the French army, rising to the rank of colonel. In 1678 he returned to England, where in September 1682 he was appointed governor of New York by King Charles II and granted the estate on Staten Island [New Advent].

there was an anti-Catholic and anti-tolerance reaction: in 1689, German-born Calvinist Jacob Leisler carried out a coup in New York and initiated the persecution of Catholics. Leisler's rebellion was quelled by the English loyalists, and Leisler himself was hanged. In 1693, however, an Act was passed in the New York colony that the Church of England was the ruling established church [Ellis 1955: 29-30].

Due to England's discriminatory policies and the status of a barely tolerated and sometimes fought minority, Catholics in the American colonies did not have their own hierarchy. After 1585, such a hierarchy did not exist in England, so the American church was based on 186 Jesuits who carried out missionary activities there in the years 1634-1773 under the general of the Order and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, and from 1688 under the missionary bishop with the title of Apostolic Vicar, who resided in London. When the sovereign United States came into existence, the Catholic population did not exceed 25,000. Massachusetts was dominated by the Puritans, Pennsylvania by the Quakers, and the rest of the states by Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, and other Protestant denominations. 156 years passed from the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries until the appointment of the first American bishop in 1790.

This was already in the independent United States, and the function was assumed by John Carroll (1735-1815).[6] After joining the Jesuit Order in Europe, he returned to America in June 1774. In the absence of a church organization in Maryland, he worked there as a missionary. In 1774, he founded the parish of St. John the Evangelist in Silver Spring. The conflict between England and the colonies drew Carroll into the struggle for independence. He contributed to this cause by writing letters to various personalities he had met in Europe. On 15 February 1776, Carroll was appointed by the Continental Congress as one of the envoys sent to Canada to agree on cooperation with the local authorities, or at least on their neutrality vis-à-vis the colonies' war with England. Although the mission

[6] His father, Daniel, originating from a respected Irish family persecuted by the English for religious reasons, came to America as a young boy. John Carroll was born on a plantation inherited by his mother Eleanor Darnall, granddaughter of the aforementioned Colonel Henry Darnall, near Marlborough Town in the colony of Maryland. He was schooled at home and then educated at a secret Jesuit school on the Bohemia farm under the supervision of Father Thomas Poulton. At the age of 13, he was sent to the Jesuit College of St. Omer in Flanders. At the age of 18, Carroll entered the Jesuit novitiate. He studied philosophy and theology in Liège and was ordained as priest in 1761. Ten years later, he joined the Jesuit Order. He was very critical of the dissolution of the order by Pope Clement XIV [NCoBA: 480-482].

itself proved unsuccessful, Carroll met Benjamin Franklin during that travel. This acquaintance later turned into a vibrant friendship. On 26 November 1784, Carroll received Vatican documents appointing him head of the Catholic clergy in the United States in the capacity of the apostolic prefect. In this role, he tried to influence the Holy See for the Vatican to avoid creating the impression that church appointments were an act of interference in the internal affairs of an independent state. In April 1789, Carroll was elected bishop by the clergy of the new state – the United States. After expression of approval of the decision by Pope Pius VI, Carroll went to England, where on 15 August 1790 he received episcopal consecration as the first American.

Discrimination against Catholics began to subside during the American War of Independence. The slogans of the colony's freedom from the metropolis were consistent with the tolerance aspirations of the architects of the federation. In 1775, George Washington denounced as nonsense the Anglican zeal in burning effigies of the Pope and celebrating the Guy Fawkes Day in honour of the hero of the "Gunpowder Plot" [*The Writings of George Washington*: 65]. The Founding Fathers of the United States needed the favour of Catholic France against England. During the War of Independence, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland passed acts of religious tolerance. It was a necessity of the moment. Otherwise, the greatly diverse communities of the colonies would have plummeted into internal conflicts instead of uniting against the metropolis. Catholics entered the authorities of the new republic. The bishop's cousin, Charles Carroll, sat in the Senate as Maryland's representative, while another of his cousins, Daniel Carroll, along with Thomas Fitzsimmons of Pennsylvania entered the House of Representatives. When in 1788 the United States signed an alliance with France, freedom for Catholics became a matter of course. The first ambassador of France to the United States, Conrad Alexandre Gérard de Rayneval, celebrated the third anniversary of independence with a solemn *Te Deum* ceremony at St. Mary's church in Baltimore [Ellis 1955: 36-37].

At that time, the number of Catholics in the new state reached 16,000 in Maryland, 7,000 in Pennsylvania, and 2,000 in the states of New York and New Jersey. John Carroll chose Baltimore as his seat, and the influx of priests from Europe soon allowed him to send missions to Boston, New York, Charleston and the state of Kentucky. As the bishop, in 1789 Carroll founded the first Catholic university in the United States – the Georgetown College, which later adopted the present name of Georgetown University. The statue of Bishop Carroll still stands in front of the University's main Healy Hall.

Catholic leaders in the North American English colonies vigorously supported religious freedom, being ahead of most of the Catholic clergy in Europe. In 1784, while still a priest, John Carroll said: "(…) if we have the wisdom and temper to preserve, America may come to exhibit a proof to the world, that general and equal toleration, by giving a free circulation to fair argument, is the most effectual method to bring all denominations of christians to an unity of faith" [*An Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America by a Catholic Clergyman* 1784: 115].

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