

*English and Catholic: The Lords Baltimore in the Seventeenth Century.* By JOHN D. KRUGLER. Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. 336 pages. \$46.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Owen Stanwood, *Catholic University of America*

In the seventeenth century, English Catholics faced a terrible dilemma. Even practicing their religion in public made them appear to most of their neighbors as faithless subjects under the control of the pope. Nonetheless, as John D. Krugler indicates in his illuminating study of the first Lords Baltimore, some individual Catholics were able to “beat the system and flourish” (4). For three generations of the Calvert family, the problem of loyalty inspired a “new and radically different model for church-state relations” (x) that manifested itself in their colony of Maryland. Though this experiment in religious toleration ultimately failed, Krugler focuses on the Calverts’ positive achievements, noting that they kept good order in their diverse and contentious colony for several decades, pointing the way toward modern ideas of separation later enshrined in the American Revolution.

Krugler’s analysis begins with Sir George Calvert, the scion of a Yorkshire Catholic family whose early conversion to Anglicanism allowed him to rise through the ranks of James I’s court and become one of the king’s secretaries of state. His reputation plummeted during the controversy over the Spanish match in the 1620s, when the king’s attempt to marry his son to the Spanish Infanta provoked massive popular disapproval. With his political advancement out of the question, Calvert converted back to his childhood faith and became active in colonial affairs. Charles I granted him an Irish title, making him Lord Baltimore, and a charter to colonize Newfoundland. Calvert invested in overseas plantations primarily to build his estate, but he also hoped to find a place within the English polity where Catholics could escape the penal laws that restricted public worship and officeholding in England. Calvert believed that by maintaining a secular government that steered clear of religious preferences he could ensure the king’s subjects’ political allegiance and build more profitable colonies. In other words, he was driven simultaneously by conscience and self-interest.

The first Lord Baltimore never realized most of his plans in America. The Newfoundland plantation made little money, and Calvert himself fled after enduring one northern winter. In the meantime he pressed the king for a new charter to settle on the Chesapeake Bay north of Virginia. Despite opposition from powerful interests who feared granting land to a Catholic, Calvert won his patent in 1632; his death the same year left the task of building Maryland to his son, Cecil Calvert. The most engaging chapters of the book recount how Cecil transformed his father’s vision into an extraordinary colonial experiment on the Chesapeake Bay.

Krugler paints the second Lord Baltimore as perhaps the most successful absentee proprietor in colonial history. Colonization was a dangerous undertaking in the best of circumstances, and the proprietor’s Catholicism made him an easy target for enemies in London and America. Baltimore’s political acumen helped him preserve his charter, even as he endured almost constant political infighting and two successful rebellions against proprietary authority in Maryland, all amid a political crisis in England that culminated in civil war. After Protestant rebels overthrew his government in 1644, Baltimore relinquished power to Protestants, silencing rumors that only Catholics could advance in Maryland. At the same time, he found an unlikely sympathizer in Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector, who, despite being on the opposite end of the religious spectrum, shared Calvert’s desire for limited liberty of conscience. This commitment appeared most clearly in the 1649 act concerning religion, which guaranteed freedom of private worship to any Trinitarian Christian.

After 1660 Calvert's experiment in religious liberty seemed destined for success. During the fifteen years following Charles II's Restoration, the colony enjoyed economic prosperity and political stability, a circumstance that Krugler largely credits to the proprietor's religious policies. Maryland's founders boldly attempted to temper the religious passions prevalent in England by separating church and state and ensuring limited toleration, and the main beneficiaries were Quakers and especially Catholics. Barred from high office in most parts of the Empire, these two minority groups prospered in Maryland; the construction of a Catholic church in the capital of Saint Marys City, facing the statehouse, offered the most stunning symbol of Catholic success. In a realization of the first Baltimore's vision, Catholics found a place within the Empire where they could remain true to both their church and their king.

Krugler finds much to admire in the Calvert model of church-state relations. In the end, however, his narrative points toward a conclusion that Krugler never has the heart to voice: as a political strategy, that model failed. Except for the years from 1660 to 1675, Maryland's early political history was unusually tumultuous. Dissident groups challenged proprietary authority almost as soon as the first boats landed on the Chesapeake, and they expressed particular opposition to Baltimore's religious policies. Almost no one wanted toleration. Protestants believed it to be a ruse to hand authority to papists, and Baltimore's supposed Jesuit allies complained that he denied them special privileges, and even threatened to excommunicate him. As the baron realized, the only way to enforce religious policy was by "executive fiat" (156), since no legislative body would allow toleration.

The experiment ended in 1689 when Protestant Marylanders rose up against the proprietor in the wake of England's Glorious Revolution, paving the way for the establishment of the Church of England and the exclusion of Catholics from political life. Krugler blames Charles Calvert, the third Lord Baltimore, for this failure, branding him a tactless and unskilled administrator who lacked his predecessors' strategic vision. Though the proprietor's missteps exacerbated the crisis, the widespread complaints against him closely resembled those against his father decades earlier. If Krugler looks with admiration on the Calverts' vision, a vast majority of the subjects who lived under the proprietors viewed them with suspicion that bordered on hatred.

This observation raises a central problem with *English and Catholic*: though Krugler understands the Calverts, he makes no attempt to understand their opponents. His attacks on "militant intolerant Protestantism" (98) verge on the polemic, describing antiproprietary colonists as ignorant cowards who "proved incapable of throwing off the shackles of the past" and "turned their backs on the future" (244). The book suffers from an incomplete and unsatisfying treatment of English anti-Catholicism. Though Krugler frequently cites the power of antipopery in early modern politics, he never explains why Protestants hated Catholics so much. For many "hot" Protestants, popery was not just a rival religion; it was an antireligion directed by the Antichrist. Such an interpretation made compromise not just unwise, but a betrayal of God. Additionally, Protestants theorized that papists favored arbitrary government: a belief that the Calverts' opponents constantly cited. Whereas the Lords Baltimore may have been "closer to Thomas Jefferson than to their contemporaries" (249) on the question of church and state, their political views better resembled Sir Robert Filmer. They were unapologetic royalists during a century when the rights of legislatures steadily increased, and this resistance to representative government only confirmed to their subjects that the Calverts were no different from the Catholic despots who ruled France or Spain.

Despite these problems, Krugler's book is a fine addition to the field, and will be useful not only to students of early Maryland but also to those interested in court politics, English Catholicism, and the development of religious toleration. One hopes that its publication will herald a new era in Maryland studies, when scholars will tackle the colony's religious and political history with the same passion that was brought to the study of its demographic and economic development.