1934

Quaker persecutions in Massachusetts from 1656 to 1661

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Boston University
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Thesis

QUAKER PERSECUTIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS FROM 1656 TO 1661

Submitted by
Josephine Ruth Minehan
(B.S.Ed., Worcester Teachers College, 1931)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Education

First Reader - Franklin C. Roberts
Second Reader - George K. Makechnie

1934
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction ......................................................... 1
- The Nature of Quakerism ........................................ 4
  - The Rise of Puritanism .......................................... 4
  - George Fox ...................................................... 5
  - The Doctrines of the Friends .................................. 9
- Puritan Antagonism to Quakers .................................... 16
  - Reasons for Puritan Antagonism .............................. 16
  - "The Body of Liberties" ........................................ 21
  - Puritans' Justification ........................................ 22
  - Quaker Reaction ............................................... 28
- Laws and Atrocities against the Quakers ......................... 31
  - The Arrival of the First Quakers ............................ 31
  - The First Law against the Quakers ........................... 32
  - Banishment of Nicholas Upsal ................................ 35
  - Persecutions under the Law of October, 1656 .............. 35
  - Law of October, 1657 ......................................... 37
  - Withdrawal of Inhabitants from Assemblies ................. 40
  - Invasion of the Colony by Other Quakers ................. 41
  - Persecution of Leddra and Brend ............................. 41
  - Infliction of the Death Penalty ............................. 44
  - Treatise by John Norton ....................................... 47
  - Banishment of Six Quakers .................................... 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banishment of Quakers upon Pain of Death</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Legislation against Quakers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker Executions</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence of Death Passed upon Three Quakers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution of Robinson and Stevenson</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vindication Issued by Puritans</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments for Violators of the Laws</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Dyer's Execution</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clemency Allowed Quakers</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution of William Leddra</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Sentence Passed upon Christison</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation of Imprisoned Quakers</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual Cessation of Persecution after 1661</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Order from King Charles</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Suspension of Laws against the Quakers</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of the Restoration</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

To the vast majority of people the Puritans appear as a dogmatic, irrational, and intolerable group whose by-word, in all things, was repression. However, as one delves into the records of the past the ideals for which this group aspired rise to the surface and become clothed in the light of comprehension. The indomitable faith, courage, and purpose of the Puritans is indeed worthy of commendation. The harsh measures adopted by the Puritans, in an attempt to keep their domain impregnable, could not deter one sect from migrating in small groups to the Bay Colony; the Quakers were of the belief that God commissioned them to continue the work started by Him and His disciples -- that of preaching and practicing the doctrines of Christianity -- love of God and neighbor - in the conduct of daily life. They endeavored to simplify the credos and rituals that are a part of every denomination; to be guided by immediate personal communication with God; and to carry into every day life the practices of the commands of Christ.

The men who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony were from the middle strata of English society; they were men highly respected in the business and social circles of their own communities. It took a high degree of courage and faith on their part to leave the comfort of their established homes and embark
upon the perilous venture of establishing a colony in the New World. They had a combined purpose in migrating to this vast wilderness - commercial and religious. Their ideals were set above the commonplace tenor of the day. For themselves and their posterity, they sought to establish a state closely allied with and guided by religious principles; they sought to rear a theocracy. To them this connoted security - security for those who held the same religious beliefs as they. Those who cherished tenets at variance with theirs were not welcomed into their midst; but the non-conformists were aware of the feeling of antipathy for their sects on the part of the Puritans and they had ample opportunity to go to other colonies where all sects were cheerfully welcomed and well received.

As for those dissenters who did make ingress into the colony, they were not persecuted because of their religious beliefs, as is commonly held to be true; but they, in pursuance of their religious practices, in many instances, violated the laws established by the colonial fathers, caused rife in the various communities, and disturbed the peace and conduct of the colony. When persons committed such breaches of the law or custom they were taken into hand and dealt with according to the law which may seem to us to be harsh in view of the offenses committed. We must bear in mind that the Puritans were not singularly intolerant; this attitude was not peculiar to them alone, but
It was common to nearly all sects of that day.

The establishment of the practice of religious toleration, in which the pursuance of spiritual tenets was countenanced but not welcomed, was not the goal of the Quakers; they sought a higher and loftier one - religious liberty which to them carried the connotation of freedom of belief and interpretation on the part of all. To them the Puritan theocracy afforded the opportunity for missionary work. They came in small numbers, made converts, were banished, returned, and suffered the punishments conceived by the Puritan mind, even that of death. All their sufferings were not in vain for within a half century after the arrival of the first Quaker on the soil of the Bay Colony, the Puritan theocracy had been razed and in its stead was reared the lofty ideal, common to all America today, religious liberty.
THE NATURE OF QUAKERISM

History is the record of man's attempt to build a civilization. Among all the races each succeeding generation has striven to reach a new level. By the Middle Ages a world empire and a world religion were sought by Europeans. In that era persons did not join the Empire or the Church; they were born into both. The medieval forefathers entertained no thoughts of breaking away from the Church. Gradually, by a series of devastating wars during the Sixteenth Century, both civil and religious in nature, the world empire was broken into many units, and in these national units new churches were established; thus, was the disintegration of the world church accomplished. Following closely upon the heels of the Protestant Reformation in England was the evolution of a new religious attitude known as Puritanism, which, in its essence, was a reaction against the immorality and excesses of the times. After many years of rallying, Puritanism reached its zenith about 1648 with the execution of Charles whose despotism brought his own head upon the block and drove his family into exile. "Torn by civil war, agitated with bitter theological disputes, full of men dissatisfied with the church, with the state, with almost every existing institution, England was indeed in a sad way. It was amid such surroundings, influenced by such currents of thought, out of such a

1. Thomas, R. H. and A. C. - History of Friends page 183
hurly-burly" that a new sect arose as a refutation of class distinctions and the formal conduct of church services; these new reformers were known as Quakers.

Toleration was aided and abetted by many of the more influential persons during the first half of the century; but with the succeeding years, during the reigns of Charles II and James II, ineffective efforts were made "to stay the progress of free inquiry and to arrest the development of liberal principles". By the middle of the century "controversy seemed to possess all classes. Thousands of controversial books and tracts were published. Parliament turned aside from the consideration of state affairs to discuss questions of religion. The courts of justice were continually the arena of religious debate. Itinerant preachers addressed multitudes of eager men and women in public houses, in the market-place, in barns, and in the open fields. The churches were filled with congregations gathered not only to hear aggressive sermons delivered by regular pastors, but to listen to the harangues of speakers representing other sects". During such a period, and in such surroundings Quakerism had its inception.

The "apostle" of Quakerism, George Fox, was born in Leicestershire in July, 1624. He was a precocious lad of serious disposition which approached moroseness.

1. Hallowell, R. P. - Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts page 3
2. Ibid. page 3
"He was never young; his boyhood was valuable to him only as it fitted his manhood, his manhood, only so far as it prepared him for another life". From the time he was nineteen until he was twenty-two young Fox was shaken by a mental and spiritual conflict which, if he had been of a weaker intellect would have caused complete derangement. During this trying period, he sought solace from many sources - from the mental as well as the spiritual doctors - but to no avail. Of them he said, "I saw they were all miserable comforters; and this brought my troubles more upon me". Among those sought by Fox was one John Macham who prescribed "bleeding" his consulter; but this sedative proved ineffectual. Of his condition, Fox said, "My body being, as it were, dried up with sorrows, grief and troubles, I could have wished I had never been born, or that I had been born blind, that I might never have seen vanity and wickedness, and deaf, that I might never have heard vain and wicked words, or the Lord's name blasphemed". He turned more and more to the dissenters, but found little satisfaction with most of them. His great source of consolation and enlightenment during this time, and henceforth, was God.

This arch non-conformer would not attend First-day services because he held that being bred at Cambridge or Oxford was not

2. Journal of George Fox page 5  
3. Ibid. page 5
enough to qualify a man to become a minister of God; only those who received the spiritual gift of religion from God could teach it. His meditations brought to him the conviction that religion consisted "not in outward profession, nor in external forms and ceremonies, but in purity of heart and an upright walking before God". He held also that God did not dwell in man-made temples, but in people's hearts. Since the word of God is in every man's heart he, without the aid of a second person, can interpret God's laws. Thus, in the sight of Fox, an ordained priesthood was sacrilegious, church worship was idolatrous. So, as an offspring of Fox's period of conflict, emerged the principle of Inward Light which is the foundation upon which Quakerism grew and waxed strong enough to defeat the efforts of a Puritan theocracy which attempted to crush it a few decades later.

Fox made his first appearance as a preacher of this age-old, but newly-discovered, fundamental truth in the year 1647, although no formal organization was effected until twenty years later. Because of their seemingly unorthodox behavior, during the formative years of their existence, the Quakers brought down upon their heads a persecution which, in the light of England's treatment of earlier non-conformers, would seem to be not altogether unwarranted. Catholics and Protestant dissenters had long been harassed because of their failure to

1. Gibbons, William-Discipline of the Society of Friends page 4
conform to the religious tenets then considered as conventional. On the other hand, the Quakers introduced a new and hitherto unknown note - freedom of religious thought and individual interpretation of the Bible, the interposition of which sounded a discord in the religious drama of the times. Thus, religious dissention in its quintessence - radicalism - brought down upon the Quakers severe and long-continued oppression. But, as is frequently the case, the more they were persecuted, the more their sect flourished, not only in England but also in other parts to which their missionaries migrated.

The converts to this religion were staunch believers in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, but they were dissatisfied with the teachings and practices of the day. Neither Fox nor any of the early Friends ever claimed to be inspired; it has proven a great source of satisfaction to members "that nowhere in the authorized documents of our society is the word inspiration applied to the ministry of Friends". His religious views were indeed novel and they attracted wide attention; by many they were held in abhorrence, but "persevering, through every obstacle, in a faithful testimony to the simplicity of truth, he found many persons who, entertaining kindred impressions with himself, were fully prepared not only to adopt his views but publicly to advocate them. The violent persecution

1. Rhodes, B. - Three Apostles of Quakerism page 9
2. Gibbons, William-Discipline of the Society of Friends page 5
which they encountered served only to invigorate their zeal and multiply their number of their converts. United on common ground of conviction, endeared still more to each other by a participation of suffering, and aware of the benefits to be derived from systematic co-operation, George Fox and his friends soon became embodied in an independent religious community”.

Multiplicity of doctrine is noticeably lacking as a feature of Quakerism; as a matter of fact, the fundamental principle upon which this religious structure was reared is that of Inward Light, which was developed and propounded by Fox himself. It was "opened to him", during his years of emotional and spiritual conflict, that the law of God is written in all men's hearts, and in order to interpret it correctly each must listen to the voice of God as it speaks in his own soul. If the voice of the Almighty be adhered to in such matters it will be all-sufficient as a spiritual guide. The logic involved in the evolution of the doctrine of Inward Light can be readily recognized. The Friends believe that a knowledge of the gospel is founded upon immediate revelation; the gospel admits to them a personal communion with God. Thus, to adhere to the religion of Christ, they need "neither priest nor book to administer or to illustrate it; for all outward rites and ceremonials are, to this religion, but clogs or cumbrous appendages, God himself being the author, its voucher, and its teacher". They further

1. Gibbons, William-Discipline of the Society of Friends page 9
hold that God has given to every man, at his birth, "a measure or manifestation of this divine light, grace or spirit, which, if obeyed, is all-sufficient to redeem or save him". This Light enables all to distinguish what is necessary for salvation; it has not been bestowed upon a select few, but has been universally given to the spiritual. Gibbons points out that "this unspeakable gift, through the infinite wisdom and goodness of divine economy, speaks to every man's condition, supplies all his spiritual need, and is a present and all sufficient help in every emergency and trial".

This is the only theological doctrine involved in the Quaker religion. Thus stripped of the superfluities of religious ritual and dogmatism, Quakerism stands forth as the quintessence of simplicity. The efforts of Fox and his followers have been characterized as "an attempt to recover the freedom and spontaneity of the New Testament Christianity in the days before the Hebraism of the first followers of Jesus had been philosophized by the Greeks or imperialized by the Romans".

The founder held that Christianity was not a figment to be given credence and idealized, but rather it was a practical and personal experience to be lived according to the promptings of the inward Light. In formulating his religious theories, Fox

1. Gibbons, William - Discipline of the Society of Friends page 10
2. Ibid. page 12
3. Grubb, Edward - Quaker Thought and History page 5
took his pattern from Christ's teachings, namely, true religion is a state of the heart, and external righteousness in itself is worthless. "A man who loves and serves God in the spirit is the true worshipper whether he live in some desert solitude or ply his busy vocation on the mart of some crowded city".

In their search to institute a simple and sincere faith, the Quakers construed the Bible in such rigorous fashion as to cause long and continued censure to be brought down upon themselves. Their doctrine of inward Light obliterated the necessity for an ordained and paid clergy, the sacraments, rituals, and services were deemed exuberant since they were merely outward signs of one's religious beliefs; to the Quaker, every day of the week was holy since it was a gift from the all-giving hand of Providence, and therefore the First-day was not held to be one of special worship and devotion - a common tenet of other Christian sects. Their worship consisted of silent meditation interdispersed with short prayers and exhortations by any who were moved to utter them because they, according to their discipline, "believe that they that worship the Father aright, must worship him in spirit and in truth and not in a formal manner. Hence, when we meet together for public worship, we do not hasten into outward performances". They condemned the use of water baptism, communion by means of the outward elements of

1. Wagstaff, W.R. -History of the Society of Friends page XVI
2. Gibbons, William -Discipline of the Society of Friends page 18
bread and wine, and the use of church ordinances. A paid clergy was not countenanced because it was contrary to Christ's command, for he said, "Freely ye have received, freely give".

Further, in order to become a minister of Christ, one must be endowed with a special gift which no scholastic training or ordination could bestow or develop.

Because Christ had in his teachings advocated peace and goodwill among all men, the followers of Fox considered war to be against the law of God, and so refused to participate. Likewise, Christ forbade His disciples to swear; this to the Quakers precluded the taking of an oath. They were the highest exemplification of simplicity in their manner of dress and speech; of this they say, "We condemn frivolous and vain amusements, and changeable fashions and superfluities in dress and furniture, shows of rejoicing and mourning, and public diversions. They are a waste of that time given us for nobler purposes, and are incompatible with the simplicity, gravity, and dignity that should adorn the Christian character". To them all men were equal in the sight of God and man, titles of address were mere flatteries not to be indulged in by any of their sect since they tend to nourish a principle, "the antagonist of that humility and meekness which, after the example of Christ, ought to attach to his disciples". They addressed all men by their

2. Ibid. page 22
Christian names or by the appellation "Friend". It was in this manner that the name Friends was affixed to them - the term they still employ, they never having sanctioned the use of the word Quaker which was first applied as a term of derision:

1 "George Fox once told a persecuting magistrate to 'tremble at the word of God' whereupon the godless official jeeringly called him a Quaker".

A current belief which warrants vehement denial is that the early Friends were law-breakers who had no regard for civil authority. Regarding this Hallowell says, "they were an eminently law-abiding people, and had profound respect for the office of the civil magistrate. For the insignia of office they had, perhaps, too little regard, but for law on which social order and well-being depend, they showed a most exemplary fidelity".

There was nothing peculiar about the Quakers except that like most reformers they propounded theories which in essence were about two hundred years in advance of the thinking of their generation. "They demanded arbitration two hundred and fifty years ago. They labored for the political freedom of man in 1647. They gave their women equal rights two and a

1. Hallowell, Richard P. - Pioneer Quakers page 6
2. Hallowell, Richard P. - Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts page 25
3. Holder, Frederick C. - Quakerism in Great Britain and America pages 33 and 34
half centuries before women secured the right to vote in an American state. They denounced war as legalized murder and a remnant of barbarism, and in 1648 advocated the methods of peace for which Andrew Carnegie and the American Peace Society are working today". It is true that because the sect had its inception in an age rife with religious excitement and controversy many of its proponents became arduous to the point of fanaticism; and, as Hallowell says, "occasionally were guilty of acts inconsistent with proper decorum".

1. Hallowell, Richard P. - Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts page 29

2. Ibid. page 31
mediator between themselves and God; they were in quest of a vital religion which would function every hour of the day and every day of the week; they endeavored, in fine, to be exemplars of the "Golden Rule" and to follow the living example set by Christ Himself. They sought and found, but when they attempted to spread their faith which demanded absolute religious liberty, their zeal and sincerity was erroneously construed as fanaticism, and they were persecuted even to death.
PURITAN ANTAGONISM TO QUAKERS

Among the newly rising sects, there was none of whom the Puritan rulers of New England were more apprehensive than the Quakers. This feeling is not difficult to comprehend if we bear in mind that the Quakers laid claim to the possession of Inward Light - the gift from the Spirit which enabled man to distinguish right from wrong, and which, if obeyed, would lead him to salvation - the mere pretense of which was held to be blasphemous, sacreligious, and irreverent by the Fathers of Massachusetts. They had a particular fear of all thinking which smacked of individualism and anomalousness; they entertained a deep horror and distrust of those who claimed to be given to revelations and interpretations. It is true that in this light other non-conforming sects were persecuted but the "saddest and darkest stain upon the early annals of Massachusetts attaches to the treatment of the people called Quakers". In the interpretation of Holy Scripture this "accursed sect of haereticks" displayed a rationalization so abhorrent to the Puritans that it called forth caustic accusations from the tongue and pen of that personification of Puritanism - Cotton Mather. He was the eminent scholar of his day in the Massachusetts colony; the son of Increase Mather, "the thundering...

1. Ellis, George - Treatment of Intruders and Dissentients page 77
clergyman who tried to fasten the church on the state in Massachusetts and then to make the established clergy the masters of the church", he was well educated in the arts and sciences as well as in theology in which he took a particular interest.

"He wrote huge volumes on religious question - roads to salvation and ways to hell. He rolled from the press innumerable pamphlets on every conceivable point of theological interest and made pretensions to authority worthy of a Tudor or a Bourbon". Among his best known religious works is "Magnalia Christi Americana"; in this he vehemently wrote of the Quakers. "In Quakerism we see the sink of all heresies, we see the vomit cast out in the bypast ages, by whose kennels of seducers, licked up again for a new digestion and once more exposed for the poisoning of mankind".

The Quakers did not reject the Bible as the rule of life as was averred by their persecutors; Fox and his followers were meticulous to note how closely their doctrines correlated with the Bible. However, they did tolerate freedom of interpretation, and differences of opinion - subsidiaries of the generation of a practical religion. The Puritan theocracy was an exemplification of the attempt to establish a community in which all were united by common belief; thus, to countenance the admission of non-conformists would prove dangerous to the accomplishment of such an objective.

Of all the sects, it was a foregone conclusion that the Quakers would prove to be utterly detrimental since their non-conformity was an aspect of a deeper and more enduring attempt to modify the existent religion. They not only failed to accede to the accepted evangelical dogmas, but they sought to accomplish their demolition, and to rear a super structure of a practical theology in their wake. The pioneers of Foxian Quakerism, unlike their fellow members of a later date, were not satisfied with mere toleration. If such had been the case, they might have been contented to remain in Rhode Island where they were well received and well treated; but, because the Fathers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony strove to suppress their credenta, they openly attempted to break down the narrow ecclesiastical system of the colony.

Massachusetts Bay Colony was settled by the members of a commercial corporation chartered by the king in 1629; the emigrants who settled north of the little colony, already settled since 1620 by an outlawed band of Separatists, were members of the middle class of English society. "They were not radicals in religion; they wanted moderate reforms in the Church of England but no revolution". According to their duly authorized charter they were granted territory in the New World, they might increase their numbers, elect their governing officials, make laws, and engage in innumerable economic enterprises.

Unlike the Virginia Company, which had made a settlement in this world two decades before, the seat of the corporation, many of the stockholders in the enterprise, and the charter were transferred to this side of the Atlantic. “Instead of trying to plant and govern a colony beyond the sea, the Massachusetts Company came over itself to the scene of action, directed the labors of the planters, and participated immediately in every phase of the enterprise. It was in truth, therefore, an actual self-governing state set up in the New World”.

“If it had not been for unforeseen circumstances such as topography, soil, climate, and dearth of labor Massachusetts leaders would have set up a stratified social order not unlike that of England. As it was, the franchise was extended only to members of the accepted church; this practice attained until the turn of the century. Thus, there was set up in the Bay Colony a theocracy - "a government of the people, by the people, for the people of a particular church". For the first two decades of settlement, the colony was free from dissenting sects, but gradually non-conformers and ranters arose within the settlements themselves to augment the numbers of Antinomians, Catholics, Baptists, and Quakers which were finding access into the jurisdiction.

2. Ibid. page 55
The appearance of the first of the "accursed haereticks" in 1656 was not a surprise to the Fathers; they had adhered to a strict vigilance which dated its inception back to the rise of that "illiterate and ill-balanced youth, given to hypochondriac meditations" some ten years before. That the Puritans were prepared for the event of Quakerism is proven in the Massachusetts Records which record the appointment of a fast day "to see the face of God in behalf of our native country in reference to the abounding errors, especially those of Ranters and Quakers". This is the first reference to be found to the Quakers in the official records.

The fanaticism of the New England Quakers has been greatly exaggerated and over-estimated; the exploits of a few fanatics always found in the embryo stages of a new movement - have brought long continued disapprobation upon the entire body of Friends in the colonies. This was the age of intolerance; it was manifest abroad to such a degree as to almost eclipse the reflection it cast in the colonies. Thus, did the Puritans become dogmatic, intolerant, and bigoted in all matters pertaining to religion; their actions on numberless occasions took on the aspect of fanaticism. In this light, the so-called Quaker monomania may be explained as a normal reaction to the

1. Ellis, George - Treatment of Intruders and Dissentients page 77
2. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 270
ceaseless oppression suffered by this sect at the hands of the Puritan dogmatists. After 1661 when, by order of the General Court corporal punishment was allayed upon the person of Quakers they, as a class, became law-abiding and respected citizens of the colonies in which they settled. It was impossible then, as now, to legislate persons to what is held to be the correct decorum.

When Mary Fisher and Ann Austin arrived at the Port of Boston in July 1656 their books and papers were taken from them and burned in the public square; their persons were searched for witch marks; they were imprisoned and eventually banished. All of this was done while there was no law against the Quakers then existent. As a rebuttal to the treatment accorded the women stood the "Body of Liberties" which had been enacted in 1641 as Hallowell points out, the first clause declared, "No man's life shall be taken away, no man's honor or good name shall be stained, no man's person shall be arrested, restrained, dismembered, nor any ways punished; no man shall be deprived of his wife or children, no man's goods or estate shall be taken away from him, nor any way damaged under color of law or countenance of authority, unless it be by virtue or equity of some express law of the contrary warranting the same, established by a General Court and sufficiently published, or in case of the defect of a law in any particular case, by the word of God. And in capital cases, or in cases concerning dismembering or banishment, according to that word to be judged by the General
Court".

The second clause guaranteed the same degree of protection to non-inhabitants of the colony in such wise, "Every person within this jurisdiction, whether Inhabitant or foreigner, shall enjoy the same justice and law that is general for the plantation, which we constitute and execute one towards another, without partiality or delay". Contrary to this law, Bellingham, the deputy governor, in the absence of Endicott, took charge of the proceedings carried out against these Quakers. When Endicott who was at Salem heard of the arrival of the Quakers and the treatment accorded them by his assistant, he said, "If I had been there, I would have had them well-whipped". At the convention of the council an account of the actions of the colonial officials and their reasons for them were promulgated; the Quakers had received their just due: they were not subject to protection under the said "Body of Liberties": because they, upon examination, "are found not only to be transgressors of the former laws, but hold to very dangerous, heretical, and blasphemous opinions; and they do also acknowledge that they came here purposely to propogate their said errors and heresies, bringing with them and spreading here sundry books, wherein are contained most corrupt.

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 204
2. Hallowell, Richard P. - Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts page 37
heretical, and blasphemous doctrines contrary to the truth here professed amongst us".

To the Puritans, the malevolence against the Quakers was entirely justifiable, and on October 18, 1659 the General Court issued a "declaration to vindicate their proceedings against Quakers". As early as October 14, 1656 a provision had been enacted which forbade masters of ships to bring any known Quakers into the jurisdiction; this enactment was for the purpose of securing "the peace and order heere established against their attempts whose designe was to undermine and ruine the same". Notwithstanding this law, they found their entrance "by a backe door". Thus "their impetuous and fanat- icke fury" necessitated the Fathers' endeavor to establish security for their colony. This was the age of the Commonweal th in England - England under a Puritan Protectorate. Cromwell divided England into eleven provinces and a Major-General was put in command of each; it was the duty of the Major-Generals to inculcate the "godly life", and indeed their concept of a godly life was strict conformance to the rules of conduct set by the Puritans. "The Major-Generals were engaged in turning England into a reformatory; and the Puritans, harmless enough so long as they kept their rules of behavior

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 385
2. Ibid. page 385
3. Robinson, Cyril E. - England page 303
to themselves, were proving more intolerable tyrants than ever Laud had been". Persecution of non-conformers, countenanced during this era, increased in intensity during the reigns of Charles II and James II. To escape the severe cruelties practiced upon them, many of the Quaker sect migrated to the Continent, the West Indies, and America where they also found persecutors.

Among those who made their appearance in New England, there were zealots who were aggressive and fanatical, and they were not true representatives of the Friends; their extravagances of conduct brought them into conflict with the authorities. Severe persecuting laws were enacted against the Quakers which served to fan the flame of ardor within the breasts of the more aggressive of the sect; the strict enforcement of these laws has left a blood spotted record in the history of the Bay Colony.

In defending themselves, the Puritans said, "The consideration of our graduall proceedings will vindicate us from the clamorous accusation of seuerritje, our own just and necessary defense calling upon us to offer the points which these persons haue violently and willfully rushed upon, and thereby are become felons de se, which might have been prevented and the soueraigne, been preserved,------will manifestly evince wee desire their life absent rather than their life present".

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 386
The Quakers made ingress into the jurisdiction of Massachusetts from foreign parts as well as from neighboring colonies; the lesser punishments of imprisonment and confinement in the house of correction did not suffice to dissuade them and to keep them away. Because they still made bold to manifest their presence in this colony, "upon no other intent but to scatter their corrupt opinions and to draw others to their way, and so to make a disturbance" the colonists, through the medium of the General Court, ordained that such persons should be banished, and further, that the death penalty would be inflicted upon any who presumed to again come hither. Such comportment was defended on the contention that the doctrines of this sect were destructive to the fundamental truths of religion. Mr. Norton, the Puritan vicar, pointed out in a tract directed against the Quakers "that one opinion of theirs of being pure and without sin, tends to overthrow the whole gospel and the very vitalls of Christianity, for they that hath no sin hath no neede of Christ,----no need of repentance,----no need of Christian watchfulness,----no need to purify themselves daily, ----no need to put off the old man and put on the new when they are already without sinne".

Christ commanded that His followers obey magistrates and be subject to man-made laws for His sake, and that they also fear

1. Massachusetts Records Vol. 4 Part 1 page 386
2. Ibid. page 386
those in authority. The Quakers were likened to false teachers because it was averred they disregarded this precept. As a proof that the punishment inflicted upon the Quakers, for the infraction of the above mentioned commandment, was ethical the Puritans harked back to the biblical story of Shimey and Solomon in which the former was put to death for a breach of confinement. In this light, was not the infliction of the death penalty for a breach of banishment a legitimate outcome? Of the two, a breach of confinement appeared to be of less import since, in this instance, a person was confined to one spot, whereas in the state of banishment he is debarred only from one place and is left to enjoy liberty in all others. Thus to return defiantly to the one place from which he was barred seemed to be deserving of death.

The Puritans considered the territory embraced by their boundaries as being peculiarly theirs just as truly as a man possessing property calls it his own; for another to intrude into such jurisdiction without the proper authority and consent was held to be inquisition, more especially so if that intrusion were in spite of an express prohibition on the part of the owners. In March, 1629, King Charles I granted a charter to a group of middle-class Englishmen to a domain in America. The charter and seat of government, which had been in England, were transferred to Massachusetts; thus, a self-governing state was set up in the New World. The Fathers of
the colony deemed it to be within their power to prohibit any who might prove detrimental from enjoying free access to the jurisdiction. "If such a one should presume to enter into another man's house and habitation he might justly be impleaded as a thief and a usurper; and, if, in case of such violent assault, the owner should, se defendo, slay the assailant and intruder, his blood would be upon his own head. And if private persons may in case shed blood of such intruders, may not the like be granted to them that are the publicke keepers and guardians of the Commonwealth?"

The Quakers, by their action, laid themselves open to classification in the category of intruders and thus were liable to the punishment conceived for such a class. Their persecutors said of them, "If in such violent and bold attempt they lose their lives they may thank themselves as the blamable cause and authors of their own death". Thus did the Fathers wash their hands of blame for the subsequent immanity which befell the Quakers because they dared to set foot on soil which had been forbidden them.

The dogmas and practices of the Friends were considered iniquitous and as infectious as the plague; the Puritans, therefore, felt duty bound to protect their children and families from the company of such contaminated persons.

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 388
Likewise, the Fathers of the Commonwealth felt obligated to keep such dangerous and infected persons out of the jurisdiction in order to keep their families pure and undefiled religiously.

Christ preached to His disciples that when persecuted in one city they should flee to another; He, Himself, and His followers were forced to do so on numerous occasions. "If therefore, that which is donne against the Quakers in this jurisdiction were indeed persecution, as they account of it, what spirit may they be thought to be acted and led by, who are in their acts so contrary to the commandment and example of Christ and His saints in the case of persecution, which these men supposed to be their case?"

For their part, the Puritans considered the influx of Quakers as an act of intrusion and an attack upon the Puritan theocratic idea. On the other hand, the Friends felt themselves to be under divine command to resist and defy the persecutors and even the threat of death could not deter them from fulfilling their obligations to such promptings.

The sincerity which prompted both the Puritan Fathers and the Quakers can hardly be questioned. "The Founders scouted the possibility of Divine revelation beyond the limits of the Bible. Believing implicitly in a theocracy, where all should

1. Massachusetts Records Vol. 4 Part 1 page 390
be united by common belief, they attempted to administer a
civil government by statutes derived mainly from the Old Tes-
tament. The Quakers asserted that the soul of man is still
accessible to God and claimed religious liberty to be the
natural right of all men". Hallowell asserts that the Puritans
were the aggressors and the Quakers "took up the gauntlet of
the Puritan and accepted his challenge. They resolved to
establish in Massachusetts, the right of every man to worship
God, not according to Old John Norton's conscience, but each
according to the dictates of his own conscience". In seeking
their ends the Puritans employed the method of coercion, the
Quakers, conviction.

The Quakers, not the Puritans were the pioneers of religious
liberty in the New World; they did not claim for themselves any
right or privilege which they would not freely accord to others.
"Truth, justice, mercy, love, embracing all" was the goal in
pursuance of which they were so cruelly maltreated. The
struggle "between two indomitable wills, the one fortified by
a parchment charter and a church covenant, the other borne up
by an intense conviction of direct spiritual guidance" was
eventually won by the latter whose courage and perseverance,

1. Hallowell, Richard F. - Quakers in New England page 14
2. Jenkins, Charles F. - Quaker Poems page 45
3. Ellis, George - Maltreatment of Intruders and Dissentients page 90
in the face of such long-continued and exacting persecution, enabled them to transcend the Puritan will. A revolution had been effected; the Puritan theocratic ideal was shattered, never to be again restored. Henceforth, religious liberty in Massachusetts was to be an actuality, not a fiction.
The Arrival of the First Quakers.

In July, 1656, the first representatives of the Quaker sect, Ann Auetin and Mary Fisher, made their appearance in the Port of Boston. The rise of the sect in England had caused the Fathers to be on the watch for the dreaded intruders, therefore the advent of the two women did not find them surprised and unprepared. The governor being away at the time, Richard Bellingham, the deputy governor, sent officers aboard the ship to search the women's quarters. About one hundred books were carried ashore and were burned in the market place. Then the women were taken ashore and were committed to prison because "one of the women in speaking to him (Bellingham) had said thee instead of you; whereupon he said he needed no more, for now he saw they were Quakers". Upon their imprisonment command was given that no one should go to them without leave, for violation of which a five pound fine was imposed. One Nicholas Upsal, a communicant of the Puritan Church in Boston since 1631, paid to the jailer five shillings a week for their board and keep, he fearing lest they should be starved. At the end of five weeks, the master of the vessel which had brought them hither, William Chichester, was "bound in one hundred pounds bond to carry them back" to Barbadoes, the place from whence

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 203
2. Ibid. page 204
The text is not legible due to the image quality. It appears to be a page from a document with a dense block of text. Without clearer visibility, it's challenging to transcribe accurately.
they had come, "and not to suffer any to speak to them, after
they were put on board; and the jailer kept their beds, which
were brought out of the ship, and their bibles for his fees".

It is evident that these women were not imprisoned for any
crime, misdemeanor, or utterance of a heresy because they were
transferred from the ship to the jail as soon as their presence
on the vessel became known; they had no opportunity to speak
with anyone, and they had not violated any law. Ann Austin and
Mary Wisher were the first victims of a tragedy which for over
half a decade cast its shadows upon Massachusetts.

Within a month after the arrival of the above mentioned
women eight others of the same faith disembarked at the same
port; in this group were Christopher Holder, Thomas ThISTone,
William BREnd, John Copeland, Mary Prince, Sarah Gibbons, Maty
Whitehead, and Dorothy Waugh. These were locked up as were the
former, and after about three months were sent back in the ship
commanded by one Robert Locke who was compelled to transport
them to England at his own charge. While they were in confine-
ment Endicott warned them to "break not our ecclesiastical
laws, for then ye are sure to stretch by a halter", but when
they desired a copy of these laws it was denied them.

The First Law Against the Quakers.

During all this time there was no law against the Quakers
on the statute books of the colony. In October of the same

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 204
Year was adopted the first of "a series of deliberate and legislative measures on the part of the authorities founded on their full right to secure themselves from seditious and rancorous visitors. There was a gradation and an adaptation of penalties enacted, designed to be fitly and righteously adjusted to the measure of provocation, insolence, and defiance exhibited by the intruders". The first law enacted against the "cursed sect of haereticks lately risen up in the world which are commonly called Quakers, who take upon themselves to be immediately sent of God, and infallibly assisted by the spirit to speake and write blasphemomouth opinions, despising the government and the order of God in the Church and Commonwealth, speaking evill of dignitjes, reproaching and reviling magistrates and ministers, seeking to turn the people from the faith and gagne proseljtes to their pernicious wajes" prohibited all masters of ships from carrying Quakers into the jurisdiction on penalty of a one hundred pound fine; for the default of payment the master was liable to confinement in prison until the afore-mentioned recompense should be made to the treasurer. A commander of any vessel, legally convicted of carrying Quakers thither, was compelled to give sufficient security to

1. Ellis, George E. - Treatment of Intruders and Dissentients
   page 84
2. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 277
the governor or magistrates that he would transport them back to the place from whence they came. If he refused to do so the magistrates were empowered to incarcerate him until such time as he would agree to the terms stipulated in the law. Further, any and all Quakers who came into these parts from foreign and adjacent territory were to be kept at work in the house of correction and not suffered to converse with any during their imprisonment.

For those who knowingly and deliberately imported Quaker books and writings the exaction against them was five pounds for each. The Puritans within the colony who presumed to defend "the haereticall opinions of the said Quakers or any of their books or papers" were fined for the first time forty shillings. If they, in spite of the incursion of the aforesaid fine, continued they were to forfeit four pounds, and upon conviction for the third time they were to be confined in the house of correction until convenient passage out of the jurisdiction could be arranged for them. Lastly, those persons who reviled "the office or person of magistrates or ministers" were whipped severely or were fined to the extent of five pounds.

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 278
2. Ibid. page 278
3. Ibid. page 278
Upon publication of this ordinance, Nicholas Upsal (the same Puritan who had generously paid for victuals for Ann Austin and Mary Fisher) proceeded to warn the Fathers that they were being unreasonable, that they were fighting against God, and that they would draw down upon the land the judgment of God. For this reproach, "though he was a member of their church, and of good repute, and a man of unblamable conversation" he was fined twenty-three pounds and was ordered out of the jurisdiction, he being allowed but one month's time for his removal. He set out in mid-winter for the colony of Rhode Island; on his journey he met with an Indian who offered the old man shelter. Hearing Upsal's story the Indian commented, "What a God have the English, who deal so with one another about their God!"

Persecutions Under the Law of October, 1656.

Following the enactment of a law designed "in the hopes that the terror thereby given to these evil doers would keep them from any invasion upon the colony" the first Quakers recorded to make ingress into the colony were Anne Burden, a widow, who came hither to collect some debts that were owed to her, and Mary Dyer from Rhode Island who, until her arrival

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 204
2. Ibid. page 205
3. Mather, Cotton - Magnalia Christi Americana page 453
here, was unaware of the measures taken against the Quakers. Both were imprisoned upon reason of belonging to the "pernicious sect"; the former was kept confined in prison about four months. While she was thus confined some kind-hearted persons collected goods in payment of debts owed to her to the extent of about thirty pounds. Upon her release she was straightway shipped to England, passage by way of Barbadoes being refused her, with only a small share of her goods. At her arrival in London she paid to the master of the ship the cost of her passage although this would have been unnecessary since she was sent out of the colony against her will. In the end, after a long voyage to get subsistence for herself and her three fatherless children, this woman had nothing to show for her three years pains.

When William Dyer heard of his wife's plight he came from the neighboring colony of Rhode Island to seek her release which was secured after much difficulty. He was "bound in great penalty, not to lodge her in any town of that colony, nor to permit any to speak to her: an evident token that he was not of the Society of Quakers, so called, for otherwise he would also have been clapped into prison".

The next to suffer the consequences of the Puritan law was Mary Clarke, late of London, who came into Massachusetts to divest herself of a message addressed to the Puritan Fathers:

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers  page 217
that they should desist from further persecution. To her warning "the Puritans turned their back and she turned her back to them and they smote it" with twenty stripes of a whip with three cords. An imprisonment of twelve weeks, in the winter season, preceded her banishment.

The Law of October, 1657

In October of this same year, 1657, a more severe persecuting law was passed by the Assembly. According to this law, a Quaker who presumptuously came into this jurisdiction should for the first offense "have one of his eares cut off and be kept at work in the house of correction till he can be sent away at his oune charge and for the second offense shall have his other eare cut off and kept at the house of correction as aforesaid". A female Quaker, for the first offense, was severely whipped and confined to the house of correction until she could be sent away at her own charges; for the second offense she received like treatment. All Quakers who had suffered the law twice should, upon commission of a third breach of the law, have their tongues bored through with a hot iron and kept at work in the house of correction until they could be sent out of the environs at their own expense. There are no records to prove that the Puritans resorted to tongue boring and branding

1. Hale, Edward E. - Story of Massachusetts page 136
2. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 308
although three victims had their right ears cut off.

1. "These attempts by fines, imprisonment, and banishment, and stripes to keep the Quakers out were wholly unsuccessful. They acted as magnet in drawing Quakers irresistibly toward it. Some found themselves under the necessity of returning again, being firmly persuaded that the Lord had called them to bear testimony to his truth in these parts, having a full assurance of faith that He would support them throughout whatsoever trials and exercises He should be pleased to suffer them to be tried with".

Among those "irresistibly drawn back" to Massachusetts were Christopher Holder and John Copeland who had been banished in 1656; Holder provoked the ire of the Fathers in the town of Salem when he made bold to speak a few words in their meeting after the minister had finished. For this indiscretion "he was hauled back by the hair of the head and a glove and handkerchief were thrust into his mouth, and so turned out with his companion; and next day sent to Boston, where each of them received thirty stripes with a knotted whip of three cords, the hangman measuring his ground, and fetching his strokes with the greatest strength he could; which so cruelly cut their flesh, that a woman seeing it fell down as dead". They were then confined to close prison for three days without food or drink;

1. Hale, Edward E. - Story of Massachusetts page 136
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 218
the entire period of castigation lasted for nine weeks. A resident of Salem, Samual Shattock, who attempted to stay the hand which maltreated Holder was likewise carried to Boston, and imprisoned until he pledged himself to answer at the next Court of Assistants.

During this same year, Massachusetts made endeavors to enlist the co-operation of the neighboring colony of Rhode Island against the Quaker transgressions; Roger Williams stood firm in his refusal to aid Massachusetts in evidencing such an intolerant attitude. The colonials of Massachusetts, indignant at Williams' refusal, threatened to cut off the trade of Rhode Island which it never accomplished because in the interim Williams had appealed to Cromwell for aid.

While in Salem, Holder and Copeland had been entertained by the Southwicks, Lawrence and his wife Cassandra; this was a breach of the law enacted in October, 1656. They were first sent to Boston; there Lawrence was fined, and Cassandra was imprisoned for seven weeks.

The next to feel impelled to come to this land of persecution was Richard Dowdney of England; he was taken into custody in Dedham and was sent to Boston where he was imprisoned. He was subjected to thirty stripes, and after twenty days in prison he, with Holder and Copeland, were banished in accord with the law of October, 1657.
Withdrawal of Inhabitants from Assemblies.

These proceedings so affected the inhabitants that they withdrew from public assemblies and the First-day meetings for which practice they were fined five shillings and were committed to prison. Among those who invoked this penalty were Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, and their son Josiah, who, being brought to Boston, were sent to the house of correction where each was inflicted with stripes and were fined four pounds and fourteen shillings for non-attendance at the church services. (More will be heard of these same Quaker sympathizers at a later date.) Another to suffer the consequences of this law was William Shattock, of Boston, a shoemaker by trade, who was found in his house during the First-day services; he was sent to the house of correction where, at his entrance, he was cruelly whipped, and then kept at hard work, while his wife and children were in want during his absence. "In the meantime the deputy-governor, Richard Bellingham, did not stick to say to William's wife, that since he was poor, and could not pay the five shillings a week for not coming to church, they would continue him in prison. Bellingham also endeavored to persuade the woman, that what her husband had done, was to be rid of her, and therefore advised her to disown him".

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 243
Invasion of the Colony by Other Quakers.

The colony was again invaded by two women - Dorothy Waugh and Sarah Gibbons; both had been sent back to England within the year. In the meeting-place after the lecture they addressed a few words to the congregation which cost them six days without food in the house of correction, and a whipping.

An inhabitant of Newport, Rhode Island, Hored Garner, with her infant child and a girl helper came into the colony on a visit to Weymouth; because she was a Quaker, she and the girl were carried to Boston where a whipping with a three cord whip was inflicted upon both. "After the whipping the woman kneeled down and prayed the Lord to forgive those persecutors: which so reached a woman that stood by, that she said, surely she could not have done this, if it had not been by the Spirit of the Lord".

Persecution of William Leddra and William Brend.

In May, 1658, it so happened that William Leddra and William Brend left Salem and made their way to Newbury for the purpose of conferring with a clergyman, at the house of Robert Adams; this conference took place in the presence of one Captain Gerish who had given his word that they would not suffer the consequences. However, at the conclusion of the consultation, they were taken into custody by the same Gerish who

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 243
attempted to elicit from them the promise to depart the jurisdiction; this they refused to do, whereupon they were conveyed to Salem where, in the course of examination, they admitted that they were such as were in scorn called Quakers. Within a few days they were brought to Boston and were sent to the house of correction where they were kept for five days without food and were subjected to cruel whippings because they refused to work for the jailer "who sought his profit from the work of his prisoners". They were then given leave to depart the jurisdiction if they would pay the marshal to lead them out of the country. "They judging it unreasonable to pay money for being banished, refused this, yet said, that if the prison door was set open, they would go away".

Within the day the jailer approached William Brend and put him in irons in such a manner that it was impossible for him to move; he was kept in this position for the space of sixteen hours. Upon being brought to the mill the next morning, Brend was still insistent in his refusal to work whereupon he was most cruelly beaten with a pitched rope which had been applied with such force that the rope untwisted. By this time, Brend was in such a weakened condition that if he had acquiesced to the jailer's demands to work he would have been unable to do so.

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 244
2. Ibid. page 244
"But the inhuman jailer relented not, but began to beat anew with his pitched rope, on the bruised body, and foaming at his mouth like a madman, with violence laid fourscore and seventeen more blows on him, as other prisoners beheld it with compassion, have told. Brend, whose "back and arms were bruised and black, and the blood hanging in bags under his arms; and so, into one was his flesh beaten that the sign of a particular blow could not be seen; for all was become as jelly", lay upon the floor of the prison as if dead; "his senses were stopped, and he had for some time neither seeing, feeling, nor hearing, till at length a divine power prevailing life broke through death, and the breath of the Lord was breathed into his nostrils".

When the townspeople heard of the brutal treatment accorded to Brend they raised such a cry that the governor sent his physician to the prison to give succor to the injured man; small hopes for his recovery were held forth by the surgeon. This news so incensed the people against the activities of the jailer, "that the magistrates, to prevent a tumult, set up a paper on the meeting house door, and up and down the street, as it were to show the dislike for this abominable, and most barbarous cruelty; and said, the jailer should be dealt with

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 245
2. Ibid. page 245
3. Ibid. page 245
4. Ibid. page 245
at the next court". Due to the interference of John Horton, the head clergyman of the colony, who said, "William Brend endeavored to beat our gospel ordinances black and blue, if he then be beat black and blue, it is but just upon him; and I will appear in his behalf that did so", the action instigated by the people came to naught.

Meanwhile, the Lord touched Brend with a healing hand and he completely recovered from the wounds inflicted by his persecutor. Sanction was accorded to the jailer to whip those who refused to work; the first to receive the "sanctioned Whippings" were William Leddra and John Rousse.


The meeting of the General Court the following October extended the law against the "pernicious sect, comonly known as Quakers, lately risen, who, by word and writing, have published and maintayned many dangerous and horrid tennentts, and so take upon them to change and alter the received laudable customs of our nation in giving civill respect to equealls or reuerence to superiors whose actions tend to undermine the authority of civill government, as also to destroy the order of the churches, by denying all established formes of worship

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 246
2. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 345
and by withdrawing from the orderly assembljes allowed and approved by all orthodox professors of the truth, instead there-of, and in opposition thereunto, frequenting private meetings of theire own, insinuating themselves into the minds of the simpler, or such as are affected to the order and government in church and commonwealth, whereunto diverse of our inhabitants have been inflicted and seduced, and notwithstanding all former laws made prohibiting theire coming into the jurisdiction, they have not been deterred from theire impetuous attempts to undermine our peace and hasten our ruine". Accordingly, it was enacted that all persons of the sect, not inhabitants of the colony, found within the boundaries of the settlements were to be apprehended by any constable, commissioner, or selectman and 

"conveyed from constable to constable untill they come before the next magistrate" who should commit such persons to "close prison" where they were to remain without bail until the convention of the Court of Assistants. At this meeting they should be given trial by a special jury, and upon conviction were sentenced to banishment upon pain of death. All inhabitants convicted of being of the sect by adhering to any of their tenets, by stirring up sedition against civil authority, or by taking up any of their practices should stand examination, and upon conviction should be committed to close prison for one

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1  page 345
month, at the expiration of which time, unless they chose to depart the jurisdiction voluntarily, should give bond for their appearance at the next Court of Assistants. If, at this assembly, they should refuse to retract their tenets and reform their practices, they should be banished upon pain of death. However, if they chose rather to depart the jurisdiction voluntarily, they were not to again return thereunto without permission of the major part of the council; the punishment for disobedience to this legislative enactment was banishment upon pain of death.

The imposition of the death penalty was not brought about without a struggle; upon this question there was a decided display of opposition between the theocrats and the democrats. The bill was passed by the Council but was defeated in the House of Deputies. "Presently one of the deputies fell sick, and two others were coaxed or threatened into changing their vote, so that at last the bill was carried by a majority of one". When Wozel, the indisposed deputy, had news of the passage of the law he, filled with much consternation, wept, and said that if he had known that his absence would have occasioned the passage of such a bill "he would have crept upon his knees rather than it should have passed". The main purpose of the law was to deter the Quakers from coming into the colony; it was hoped that the mere threat of death would be sufficient to

1. Fiske, John - Colonization of the New World page 308
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 249
discourage a new influx of Quakers, and that it would not be necessary to put the law into operation. (How futile had been their expectations!)

John Norton Commissioned to Draw a Treatise Against the Quakers.

Since legislation had not halted the influx of Quakers into the Massachusetts colony, and since some of the sect contrived successfully to disperse their papers, thereby gaining supporters to their camp, the General Court, in the same year commissioned John Norton to draw up a tract that would point out the errors of the Quakers. This declaration was to be "drawn up and forthwith printed, to manifest the evill of theire tenets and danger of theire practises as tending to the subversion of religion, of church order, and civill government, and the necessity that this government is put upon to exclude such persons from amongst them, who, after due meanes of conviction shall remain obstinate and pernitious". For this treatise against the doctrines of the Quakers, John Norton, the eminent clergyman of the colony, was given a grant of land in remuneration.

Sentence of Banishment against Six Quakers.

The same assembly which passed the banishment law with its
subsequent death penalty and which commissioned John Norton to
treat of the Quaker tenets also passed sentence upon six
1 quakers. It was ordered that "Samuel Shattocke, Lawrence
Southwicke, and Cassandra Southwicke, his wife, Nicholas Phelps,
Joshua Buffam, and Josiah Southwicke shall be enjoyned at theire
perill to dept out of this jurisdiction before the first day of
the Court of Election next, wch if they neglect or refuse to
do, they shall then be banished, under payne of death; and if
in the meantime they shall transgresse agt the new law made
this Court against Quakers, they shall be proceeded with as the
sayd lawe requires; and it is refrd to the County Court of
Suffolke to declare this sentence to them, and thereupon to
release them out of prison".

The younger children of the Southwicks, Daniel and Provided,
when they saw how their parents and brother were treated made
bold to follow their example and to withdraw from the assem-
blies provided by the Puritans; for this offense they were
fined ten pounds. Since the family was in severe financial
straits, there was no fund out of which they could pay the
exaction. In order to get this money, the following order was
issued: "Whereas Daniel and Provided Southwick, son and
daughter of Lawrence Southwick, absenting themselves from the
public ordinances, have been fined by the courts of Salem and

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 349
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 278
...
Ipswich, pretending they have no estate, and resolving not to work, the court upon perusal of a law, which was made upon the account of debts, in answer to what should be done for the satisfaction of the fines, resolves, that the treasurers of the several counties are, and shall be fully empowered to sell the said persons to any of the English nation, at Virginia or Barbadoes, to answer the said fines, &c.". One of the treasurers, Edmund Basset, of Salem, in the hopes of securing his share of the debt, sought to send them to Barbadoes, but he found no other in the company who would acquiesce, and so they were sent home until convenient passage out of the colony could be arranged for them. In seeking a ship-master to carry them out of the jurisdiction Basset gave "testimony to the inoffensive character of the Quakers, rarely extorted from Puritan lips. He said to the sea captain, 'Oh, you need not fear that' (that they would spoil all the vessel's company) 'for they are poor harmless creatures and will not hurt anybody' ".

Several Quakers Banished upon Pain of Death.

The five persons, the Southwicks, Nicholas Phelps and Joshua Buffam, failed to comply with the invitation issued by the Court in October of 1658 that they depart from the colony; therefore, at the convention of the General Court in the Fifth Month of the following year all were sentenced to banishment upon pain of death, they being allowed until the eighth of
June to depart.

Legislation against the Quakers Was Non-effective.

Thus the legislation which the colonial Fathers had hoped would allay the influx of Quakers did not sound the death knell to their intrusion; for the Quakers kept coming into the colonies until, in each of the confederated colonies (Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven), laws were passed, the breach of which incurred penalties of various degrees of stringency. "Among the enactments those of Connecticut, where the younger Winthrop was all-powerful, were the most lenient, while those of Massachusetts were the most severe". At New Haven, Humphrey Norton was whipped, and burned in the hand with the letter H (signifying heretic) because he was a Quaker. The governor of Plymouth, Thomas Prince, "did not stick to say, that in his conscience the Quakers were such people, that deserved to be destroyed, they, their wives and children, their houses and lands, without pity or mercy".

"The severe penalties and punishments were vigorously inflicted and as zealously incurred. Quaker determination was more than equal to Puritan rigor and despite all manner of harsh laws cruelly inflicted more and more Quakers appeared

1. Fiske, John - Colonization of the New World  page 308
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers  page 279
3. Hale, Edward E. - Story of Massachusetts pages 137 and 138
within the jurisdiction, and even among the Church members themselves not a few appeared to be led away by the doctrine of the Inner Light.

Coercion and legislation could not swerve the Quakers from obedience to the divine promptings which bade them to visit and revisit the land where their sect was under fire of persecution. In the Massachusetts theocracy religious liberty was denied to dissenting sects; in this denial the Friends found their golden opportunity to carry on their work of conversion to the camp which offered religious liberty to all. Unlike the Puritans, the Quakers utilized the method of conviction, and within a few years the Quaker ideal of religious liberty became the byword in the Bay Colony.
QUAKER EXECUTIONS

The death penalty had been adopted, as previously pointed out, in the expectation that it would discourage a further introgression of Quakers upon the land forbidden to them in the several laws already enacted. In 1659 it became mandatory for the Massachusetts Fathers to enforce this severe penalty. In that year three persons were condemned to death at the October assembly of the General Court; William Robinson, a London merchant, Marmaduke Stevenson, a gentleman from Yorkshire and Mary Dyer, the wife of the Secretary of Rhode Island were banished from the jurisdiction upon pain of death at the last Court of Assistants which had been held in September. By order of the General Court these said persons were sent for and acknowledged themselves to be the persons banished. After the prisoners had been given a hearing, the question was put to the Court whether these persons should suffer the death penalty as prescribed by the law; "the Court resolved this question on the affirmative".

Sentence of Death Passed upon Three Quakers.

William Robinson was the first upon whom sentence was passed; 

he was called before Endicott who said, "W. Robinson, hearken to your sentence of death; you shall be had back to the place

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1  page 383
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers  page 283
from whence you came, and thence to the place of execution, to be hanged on the gallows until you are dead". Robinson was taken away, and Marmaduke Stevenson was called to the place, whereupon Endicott said to him, "If you have anything to say you may speak". He, however, remained silent, and Endicott pronounced the following sentence upon him: "M. Stevenson, you shall be had back to the place from whence you came, and thence to the gallows, and there be hanged till you are dead". In answer to this Stevenson addressed the Court, saying, "Give ear, ye magistrates, and all who are guilty; for the Lord hath said concerning you, and will perform his word upon you, that the same day ye put his servants to death, shall the day of your visitation pass over your heads, and you shall be cursed forevemore. The mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. Therefore, in love to you all, I exhort you to take warning before it is too late. that so the curse may be removed. For assuredly if you put us to death, you will bring innocent blood upon your own heads, and swift destruction will come to you".

When he had delivered this admonition he was led away, and Mary Dyer was called upon the scene, and Endicott sentenced her in the same manner as the other two; to which she replied.

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 283
2. Ibid. page 284
3. Ibid. page 284
"The will of the Lord be done".

The date of the execution was set as the twenty-seventh of the same month (October); thus, the assembly which passed the death sentence upon the trio passed an order requiring the secretary to issue the warrants for the prisoners' executions. Edward Michelson, the marshal general, was ordered to go to the prison on the appointed day and "take the said Wm. Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer into his custody, and then forthwith, by the aid of Capt. James Oliver with one hundred solders, taken out by his order proportionally of each company in Boston, compleately armed with pike and musketeers with bouder and bullett, to lead them to the place of execution, and there see them hang till they be dead".

It was also ordered that the clergymen of the community, Zachery Simes and John Norton, should go to the prisoners "and tender their endeavors to make the prisoners sensible of their approaching danger".

In the interval between the passage of the sentence upon the Quakers and the day set for the execution, upon the petition of her son, Mary Dyer was granted a reprieve; forty eight hours were allowed her to depart from the jurisdiction, when once she was given her liberty. If, at the termination of these forty

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 284
3. Ibid. page 383
eight hours, she should again be found within the colony her sentence of execution should be fulfilled.

However, she was to be kept a "close prisoner" until such time as someone should come to carry her away; also, it was ordered that "she shall be carried to the place of execution and there to stand upon the gallows with a rope about her neck, till the rest be executed, and then to retourne to the prison and remajne as aforesaid".

On the afternoon of October 27, the condemned prisoners were taken from the prison and were led to the place of execution: "the only authority regarding the locality is found in an old record which says 'I suppose the branch of the tree was the gallows' - probably the Big Tree near the Frog Pond". In their going to the place of execution the three walked hand in hand; when the marshal chided Mary Dyer for walking hand in hand between two young men she replied thus, "This to me is an hour of the greatest joy I could enjoy in this world. No eye can see, nor ear can hear, no tongue can utter, and no heart can understand, the sweet incomes or influence, and the refreshings of the spirit of the Lord, which now I feel". The beat of the drums drowned any endeavors that the prisoners made to speak.

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 1 page 383
2. Barber, Samuel - Boston Common page 30
3. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers pages 287 and 288
The Execution of William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson.

When they arrived at the place of execution, they "took leave of each other", and Robinson took his place upon the gallows first. From his place, he addressed the multitude in a declaration of innocence and called upon them to witness his martyrdom. His last words before being turned off were "I suffer for Christ, in whom I live and for whom I die". Stevenson immediately took his place upon the gallows while the attendants prepared him for his death; his last words were, "This day we be at rest with the Lord".

Mary Dyer, watching her dead companions hanging before her, stepped up the ladder; she was made ready as if for death, and then, as was decreed by the Court, she was reprieved and taken back to the prison to await the arrival of her kin who was to transport her out of the jurisdiction.

"When the stiff bodies were cut down they fell to the ground breaking Robinson's skull, and their shirts were ripped open and they were cast into a hole". So far as is known, no graves were furnished for these bodies other than the hole into which they were originally cast, which remained uncovered.

When the crowd was returning from witnessing the executions, the drawbridge fell killing one woman and severely injuring

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 288
2. Ibid. page 288
3. Barber, Samuel - Boston Common page 30
several other persons; this, to the Quaker mind, was the "visitation of the Lord" of which Robinson had warned them.

Vindication Issued by the Puritans.

The eighteenth of October, the day on which the death penalty against the Quakers was enacted and on which day sentence was passed upon Robinson, Stevenson, and Mary Dyer, also marked the issuance of a vindication, on the part of the Puritans, to sanction their acts against the "pernicious sect". Both camps were indominable; the Puritans pursued the path they considered right in attempting to rid the colony of an entirely undesirable sect; the Quakers were firm in their belief that they should suffer, yea, even death, for the sake of Christ. Brendan Lee points out, in upholding the Puritans, "The fact is no man was punished because of his religious belief; it was only when he became a disturber of the peace, a fomenter of ungodly strife that the Puritans took him in hand". The blame can not be placed squarely upon either side without displaying a decided feeling of partiality.

Punishments of Violators of the Laws.

During the ensuing year punishments, of varying degrees, were meted out to violators of the laws. Richard Swayne paid to the treasurer the sum of three pounds and was also

1. Lee, Brendan - An Apology for the Quakers Harpers, July, 1928
disfranchised because he entertained Quaker friends. Whippings, varying in severity from ten to thirty stripes, were ordered administered to Daniell Gold, Robert Harper, William King, Margaret Smith, Provided Southwicke; admonitions were given to Mary Scott, Alice Couland, Hannah Phelps, and Hope Clifton. In addition to the previous punishments, Daniell Gold, Robert Harper, Alice Couland, Mary Smith and Hope Clifton were banished from the jurisdiction upon pain of death.

Mary Dyer's Return and Execution.

Mary Dyer, upon her return to Rhode Island, took herself thence to Long Island where she remained during most of the winter; however, "persuaded that her death was necessary", she returned in the Third Month of the year 1660 to the town of Boston and "delivering herself to Governor Endicott against the wishe of the court" sentence was passed upon her. When she heard her previous sentence again passed upon her, she said, "I came in obedience to the will of God the last General Court, desiring you to repeal your unrighteous laws of banishment upon pain of death; and that same is my work now, and earnest request; although I told you, that if you refused to repeal them, the Lord would send others of his servants to

1. Barber, Samuel - Boston Common  page 31
2. Ibid.  page 31
3. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers  page 291
witness against them". At the governor's order, she was conveyed to the prison where she was kept confined until the day appointed for her execution.

At the appointed hour, the marshal general - Michelson - in the company of Captain Oliver and selected troops, led the way to the place of execution. Even when she had taken her place upon the gallows she was given an opportunity to come down if she would leave and give promise never to return to the jurisdiction; this she steadfastly refused to do, saying, "Nay, I cannot, for in obedience to the will of the Lord I came, and in his will I abide faithful to death". After some conversation with the clergyman Wilson, she was turned off, and she "did hang as a flag for others to take example by". Yet, even with such examples as these, the colony was not freed from the introgression of the Quakers, nor did the Puritans cease their relentless persecutions of the abhorred sect.

Clemency Allotted to the Nicholsons.

The Puritans did not rush upon the opportunities afforded them to put Quakers to death; in most instances ample opportunity was allowed the offenders to save themselves. In the case of the Nicholsons, Jane and Joseph, we find an example of the attribute just mentioned. These persons had been banished

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 291
2. Ibid. page 292
upon pain of death and when found within the jurisdiction after the time allotted for their departure they were called before the Court and examined as to why they had not departed. The Court held that it was meet "to declare their further clemency, as yet to give them respite, on penalty of their former sentence to depart this jurisdiction by the next four weeks; and if they, after that day shall be found in any part of the same, they shall again be apprehended and brought to Boston, where they shall be kept close prisoners, and being legally convicted thereof, shall be put to death". The Nicholsons signified their desire to leave the colony and to make their way to England; this privilege was granted by the Court which was then in session.

The year 1661 witnessed a change in the government of England; Charles the Second was now the ruler, and persecution abroad seemed at a lower ebb than it had been for years past. In this same year there came again to New England, William Leddra who had already been banished from the jurisdiction.

The Execution of William Leddra. 

"He was not so promptly disposed of as the others, for the opposition was daily growing in strength". Upon his arrival he was taken into custody and imprisoned, and shortly was

1. Massachusetts Records Vol. 4 Part 1 page 419
2. Fiske, John - Colonization of the New World page 309
brought before the Court for trial. While this trial was in progress, another Quaker, Wenlock Christison, already banished upon pain of death, came into the court and addressed those gathered there. In answer to Endicott's inquiry as to why he was there present he answered, "I am come here to warn you that you should shed no more innocent blood; for the blood that you have shed already, cries to the Lord God for vengeance to come upon you". After this deliverence the jailer was ordered to take him away.

When it was brought to Leedra's attention that he had been given leave to go to England, and that again they would give him leave to go upon his promise not to again return to the jurisdiction, he made reply thus, "I stand not in my own will but in the will of the Lord; if I am to have my freedom, I shall go, but to make a promise I cannot". The Court, upon hearing this, passed sentence of death upon him, and he was led from the room and brought to the prison. On the day appointed for the execution, the governor came to the prison, accompanied by a guard of soldiers; the chains were taken from the prisoner, he took his leave of the other prisoners, among them was Christison, and he was led to the gallows where he was hanged until he was dead. At the expiration, two of his

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 538
2. ibid. page 538
friends, Edward Wharton and John Chamberlain, took his body, laid it in a coffin, and gave it suitable burial.

The Death Sentence Passed upon Christison.

Three months later, The Court was called upon to decide the fate of Christison. The death sentence was not as easily forthcoming for this prisoner as might have been expected. There was a division among the several members of the Court concerning the punishment to be meted out to the said prisoner; some were for passing the death sentence upon him, while others were opposed to this. "Then it was that the fiery fanatic, Endicott, felt that all he had done and endured in bringing colonists from England and helping to found a godly community in America had been labor lost. If the law was not enforced upon this man, Endicott declared that the time had come when his occupation in Massachusetts was gone and he might as well return to England". The vote of the Court was taken twice and in each instance the members were reticent to openly declare the death sentence upon the prisoner.

1. Fiske, John - Colonization of the New World page 309
2. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers page 344
there you must be hanged until you are dead, dead, dead' ".

It may be said that the blood of the persecuted Quakers was shed, not by the people of the several colonies, but rather by the officials who acted, not from mere passion and heartlessness, but because they saw their plans for a theocracy, their hopes of liberty, and their ideals as God-fearing Englishmen in danger of being dashed upon the rocks of chaos by the new ideals introduced by the newly risen sect of Quakers.

Liberation of the Imprisoned Quakers.

The death sentence passed upon Christison was never executed, the law which imposed the death penalty was repealed, and there was a gradual cessation of persecution upon all non-conformers. The ideals set up by the Puritan Fathers lay broken at their feet never to be realized; the expedients for which the Quakers suffered persecution and death became incorporated as the ideals for which Massachusetts stands today. In this life and death battle, in which both fought for what they thought was the right cause, the Quakers emerged triumphant --- "the democrats of democrats".
GRADUAL CESSATION OF PERSECUTION AFTER 1661

On June 12, 1661 the General Court of Massachusetts was in convention in the city of Boston; a significant act was legislated, to wit, "Itt is also ordered that Wenlocke Christison, and all the Quakers now in prison, be forthwith acquainted with the new lawe made against them and forthwith released from prison and sent from constable to constable out of this jurisdiction, Judah Broune and Peter Pierson being, for their contempt of court, tyed to the carts tayle by the executioner, and whipt through Boston with twenty stripes apiece, and then sent out with the rest; and if any of them be found after twelve hours within the jurisdiction, he or they shall be proceeded with according to the lawe made this present Court". Thus, the doors of the prison were opened wide and Christison, in company with some twenty other Quakers, were set free. Hale says, "This general delivery may be taken as the beginning of the ebb tide in Puritan severity".

The Order from King Charles.

Within a short period an order came from the king which commanded the Fathers of the colony to cease putting people to death. The persecutions in New England were brought to the notice of the king by Edward Burrough who, in describing the

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 2 page 21
2. Hale, Edward E. - Story of Massachusetts page 140
situation to His Majesty, said that there was a vein of innocent blood opened in the dominions, which if it were not stopped would overrun all. Following this conference, the king ordered a mandamus sent to New England; Burrough requested that Samuel Shattock, then banished from Massachusetts under pain of death, be named as dispatcher to carry the said mandamus. The request was granted.

Charles' Letter.

Charles' letter read as follows:

"Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. Having been informed that several of our subjects among you, called Quakers, have been, and are imprisoned by you, wherefore some have been executed, and others are in danger to undergo the like: we have thought fit to signify our pleasure in that behalf for the future: and do thereby require, that if there be any more of those people called Quakers amongst you, now already condemned to suffer death, or other corporal punishments, or that are imprisoned, and obnoxious to the like condemnation, you are to forbear to proceed further therein; but that you forthwith send the said person over into this our kingdom of England, together with the respective crime or offences laid to their charge; to the end that such course may be taken here with them, as shall be agreeable to our laws and their demerits.

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers pages 345 and 346
And for so doing, these our letters shall be your sufficient warrant and discharge.

Given at our court at Whitehall, the 9th day of September, 1661, in the 13th year of our reign.

By his majesty's command,

William Morris

The ship chartered for the trip to Boston was in the command of one Ralph Goldsmith, also a Quaker; after a journey of about six weeks the vessel arrived in the port of Boston on the First-day of the week. Because it was the First-day the letters were not delivered on that day. In the meantime, the townspeople who had an opportunity to go aboard the ship reported to the officials that "there was a shipful of Quakers and that Samuel Shattock was among them, who they knew was by their law liable to be put to death, for coming in again after banishment; but they knew not his errand or authority".

On the morrow, Shattock and Goldsmith went ashore to seek the governor, John Endicott. They relayed word to him that their business was from the King of England, "and that they would deliver their message to none but the governor himself". When Endicott had read the king's missive, he replied, "We

1. Sewel, William - History of the Quakers  page 347
2. Ibid.  page 347
3. Ibid.  page 347
shall obey his majesty's command".

The Suspension of the Laws against the Quakers.

Within a short time an order was issued by the General Court to suspend the laws against the Quakers; also, those of the sect then imprisoned were ordered released without further delay. The order of suspension, of November 27, 1661, significantly outlined the reasons for the measures taken against the Quakers. The order read, "The just and necessary rules of our government and condition for the preservation of religion, order, and the peace hath induced the authority here established from time to time to make and sharpen lawes agt Quakers in reference to their restless intrusions and impetuous disturbances, and not any propensity or any inclination in us to punish them in person or estate, as is evident by our graduall proceeding with them, releasing some condemned and others liable to condemnation; and all imprisoned were released and sent out of our borders; all which, notwithstanding their restless spirits, have moved some of them to returne and others to fill the royal eares of our sovereign lord the king with complaints against us, and haue, by their wearied solicitations in our absence, so farre prevayled as to obtenie a letter from his majesty to forbear their corporall punishment or death.

Although wee hope, and doubt not, that if his majesty were

1. Massachusetts Records - Vol. 4 Part 2 page 21
rightly informed, he would be farr from giving them such floor, or weakening his authority here so long and orderly settled, yet, that wee may not in the least offend his majesty, this court doth hereby order and declare that the execution of the lawes in force against Quakers, as such, so farr as they respect corporall punishment or death, be suspended until this court further order".

Thus the General Court of Massachusetts, ordered, at the command of the king, that persecution against the Quakers should cease; true, all persecution did not cease at once, but gradually both sides became more rational in their religious pursuits, and in time toleration became the watchword of the colonies.

The Effect of the Restoration of Charles the Second.

The year 1660 marked the restoration of Charles as monarch of England, while it was a restoration of the monarchy, of the aristocracy, and the Established Church, it was also a parting of the ways. Henceforth there were to be two religious groups, the Established Church and the dissenters. However, the true spirit of toleration was not established until the reign of William the Third, but the Non-Conformists were increasing in such large numbers that it became evident that persecution and legislation could not obliterate the rapidly rising sects.
If the Quakers had been sent to England, as prescribed in Charles' letter, they would have been punished there; but, the Puritan Fathers were reticent to send the intruders back to the mother country because it would be a blot upon their rule in the New World. They preferred to allow the Quakers to have ingress to the colony and to go unpunished rather than to call down the ire of the king upon their heads.

"After 1661, it became impossible any longer to maintain that the Puritan commonwealth was to be a united body of believers from which all dissent should be excluded. The Quakers had brought schism into the midst of that sacred precinct and there it was forever to abide".

This was the first blow to the Puritan theocracy, but it was not many years later that the entire idea of maintaining a theocracy was blighted, with the result that it withered and died about the beginning of the Eighteenth Century.

1. Fiske, John - Colonization of the New World
CONCLUSION

Today, Massachusetts is a seat of toleration and liberalism; this was not so two and a half centuries ago. The pathway to this ideal has been strewn with broken records of cruelties and persecutions, and "red with the blood" of martyrs. If any one group can claim the credit and glory of transforming the Massachusetts state from a theocracy "of the people, by the people, for the people of a particular religious belief" that honor goes to the Friends.

For six long years the Quakers who came to this colony, and the converts made within the jurisdiction were persecuted relentlessly and were harried out of the boundaries, even upon pain of death. While the persecutions were not practiced upon the intruders because of their religious beliefs, they were indirectly attributed to that cause since in following the directions of "divine promptings" the Friends were frequently guilty of violating the laws passed by the Fathers. It eased the minds of the Puritans and their champions, and was a source of consolation to them that they did not persecute because of religious practices but because of a breach of the colonial laws. On the other hand, the Quakers were firmly convinced that they were malevolently treated because they held religious views which were not in accord with the tenets of the Puritans.
Apologists for the Puritans disclaim any blame for the atrocities committed upon the Quakers upon the ground that they had no right in the colony; they were outsiders who intruded without permission or authority. These same apologists forget that about four-fifths of the Quakers within Massachusetts were recognized residents of the colony, and had been so before the persecution began. These Quakers felt that their rights should be protected under the charter and "The Body of Liberties" which guaranteed protection for residents and strangers alike. It is true that the activities of some of the early representatives of the sect were not in accord with proper social decorum, but it must be remembered that they were swayed by an over-abundance of zeal and their exuberance guided their rather fanatical actions. But to judge the entire body of Friends by a few irrationals is wholly an unwarranted proceeding.

The nature of a theocracy must of necessity exclude many of high intelligence who would be of value to the life of a colony. In Massachusetts, only those who held to all the tenets of Puritanism were granted the franchise therefore, the liberals and reformers of the day were excluded from participation in the conduct of the government of the colony. On the other hand, as always, the clergymen who held "the whip hand" in the affairs of the communities were conservatives and reactionaries. The clergy and officials of the colony may be held to account for
the persecutions and more especially for the executions of the Quakers. In numberless instances, the actions practiced upon the dissenting sects were without the approbation of the majority of the colonists. By 1661, public opinion ran so high in denunciation of the maltreatment of the Quakers that even before the advent of Charles' letter, which ordered the cessation of corporal punishment, there was a gradual lessening in the numbers who received punishment.

Of the Puritan ministers, Hallowell says, "Their mission here, accepting their own statement to what it was, met with a richly deserved fate. It was almost a complete failure. Their plan of government was repudiated and was succeeded by wiser and more humane laws. Their religion, though it long retained its hold in theory, was displaced by one less bigoted and superstitious. It is now a thing of the past, a mere tradition, an antiquated curiosity".

It is almost a certainty that if the Quakers had not felt it meet to come to the Bay Colony to carry on their work of establishing religious liberty, the colonists themselves would have established this principle. However, if such had been the case the entire process would have been considerably slower because the period of toleration, eliminated by the Quakers, would have slowed the tempo of the movement on the part of the Puritan colonists. Reaction to the repression of the clergy,
must certainly have come. As it happened it did come instigated by the Friends, who were pioneers in the field of religious liberty, and supported by many of the people of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Thus, the principles of Quakerism derided by the Puritans over two centuries and a half ago, now shine forth as a beacon which guides us in our worldly and spiritual endeavors.
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Minehan, J. R.

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Thesis

Minehan, J. R.

Quaker Persecutions in Mass.

1931

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Minehan, J. R.