



## Revivals And Church History :: Boston martyrs

**Boston martyrs - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/10/15 21:09**

The Boston martyrs is the name given in Quaker tradition to the three English members of the Society of Friends, Marmaduke Stephenson, William Robinson and Mary Dyer, and to the Friend William Leddra of Barbados, who were condemned to death and executed by public hanging for their religious beliefs under the legislature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1659, 1660 and 1661. Several other Friends lay under sentence of death at Boston in the same period, but had their punishments commuted to that of being whipped out of the colony from town to town.

"The hanging of Mary Dyer on the Boston gallows in 1660 marked the beginning of the end of the Puritan theocracy and New England independence from English rule. In 1661 King Charles II explicitly forbade Massachusetts from executing anyone for professing Quakerism. In 1684 England revoked the Massachusetts charter, sent over a royal governor to enforce English laws in 1686, and in 1689 passed a broad Toleration act."

### Boston origins

#### John Winthrop

The settlement of Boston was founded by Puritan chartered colonists of the Massachusetts Bay Colony under John Winthrop, and acquired the name of Boston soon after the arrival of the Winthrop Fleet in 1630. It was named after Boston, Lincolnshire in England. During the 1640s, as the English Civil War reached its climax, the founder of English Quakerism George Fox (1624–1691) discovered his religious vocation. Under the Puritan English Commonwealth led by Oliver Cromwell, the Quakers in England were persecuted, and during the 1650s various parties of Quakers left England as 'Publishers of Truth'

### Mary Dyer's early work

Mary Dyer was an English Puritan living in the Massachusetts Bay Colony at Boston. In 1637 she supported Anne Hutchinson, who believed that God 'spoke directly to individuals' and not only through the clergy. They began to organize groups for Bible study in contravention to Massachusetts Colony law, and for this 'Antinomian heresy' she and her husband William Dyer, Anne Hutchinson, and others were banished from the colony in January 1637/8. They removed to Portsmouth in the Rhode Island colony together with the religious group they had formed.

### Voyage of the Speedwell

#### The Pilgrims on the Speedwell

In 1656 the Voyage of the Speedwell from England to Boston brought eight Quakers including Christopher Holder and John Copeland. (Speedwell was the ship which had first set out for the Americas with the Mayflower in 1620, but was forced to return to Plymouth having transferred her party of Pilgrims to the Mayflower.) As required by Boston law their arrival was notified, and they were brought immediately to court and imprisoned on the orders of Governor John Endecott, under sentence of banishment. While they were in prison Mary Dyer and Anne Burden arrived in Boston and were also imprisoned. After eleven weeks Holder, Copeland and the other six Quakers of the Speedwell were deported to England, but they immediately took steps to return.

### Voyage of the Woodhouse

In July 1657 the second party of Quakers for Massachusetts (including six that had been aboard the Speedwell), in the Voyage of the Woodhouse, undertaken by her owner Robert Fowler of Bridlington Quay, Yorkshire, England, made land at Long Island. With encouraging intuitions, five were put ashore at the Dutch plantation of New Amsterdam (New York), namely Robert Hodgson, Richard Doudney, Sarah Gibbons, Mary Weatherhead and Dorothy Waugh.

### Confrontations with Governor Endecott

#### John Endecott

Mary Dyer, who had gone back to England with Roger Williams and John Clarke (1609–1676) in 1652, had there heard the ministry of George Fox and became a Friend, and she and her husband also returned to Rhode Island in 1657. Holder and Copeland returned to Massachusetts and met with and convinced other Friends in Sandwich and other towns, but were arrested at Salem by Endecott and imprisoned for several months. They were released, but in April 1658 were rearrested at Sandwich and whipped. In June they went to Boston and were again arrested, and Holder's right ear was cut off as a judicial penalty. Katherine Scott, Anne Hutchinson's sister, spoke up for them and was imprisoned and whipped.

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#### Boston law against Quakers

At the end of 1658 the Massachusetts legislature, by a bare majority, enacted a law that every member of the sect of Quakers who was not an inhabitant of the colony but was found within its jurisdiction should be apprehended without warrant by any constable and imprisoned, and on conviction as a Quaker, should be banished upon pain of death, and that every inhabitant of the colony convicted of being a Quaker should be imprisoned for a month, and if obstinate in opinion should be banished on pain of death. Some Friends were arrested and expelled under this law.

#### Stephenson and Robinson

Marmaduke Stephenson had been a ploughman in Yorkshire in England in 1655, when he felt what he believed to be the love and presence of the living God as he followed the plough. Leaving his family to the Lord's care, he followed the divine prompting to Barbados in June 1658, and after some time there he heard of the new Massachusetts law and passed over to Rhode Island. There he met William Robinson, another Friend from the company of the Woodhouse, and in June 1659 with two others they went into the Massachusetts colony to protest at their laws. Mary Dyer went for the same purpose. The three were arrested and banished, but Robinson and Stephenson returned and were again imprisoned. Mary Dyer went back to protest at their treatment, and was also imprisoned. In October 1659, Endecott, as per the instruction of the law previously passed, pronounced sentence of death upon the three.

#### Executions at Boston Common

The execution day was Thursday 27 October (the usual weekly meeting day for the Church in Boston) 1659, and the gallows stood on Boston Common. They spoke as they were led there, but their words were drowned out by the sound of drums. After they had taken leave of one another, William Robinson first ascended the ladder. He told the people it was their day of visitation, and desired them to mind the light within them, the light of Christ, his testimony for which he was going to seal with his blood. At this the Puritan minister shouted "Hold thy tongue, thou art going to die with a lie in thy mouth." The rope was adjusted, and, as the executioner turned the condemned man off, he said with his dying breath, "I suffer for Christ, in whom I live and for whom I die." Then Marmaduke Stephenson stepped up the ladder and said "Be it known unto all this day that we suffer not as evil-doers, but for conscience sake." He was turned off the gallows, saying "This day shall we be at rest with the Lord." In memory of this, October 27 is now International Religious Freedom Day to recognize the importance of Freedom of religion.

#### Mary Dyer's and William Leddra's executions

"Mary Dyer led to execution on Boston Common, 1 June 1660", by an unknown 19th century artist

Mary Dyer also stepped up the ladder, her face was covered and the halter put round her neck, when the cry was raised, "Stop! for she is reprieved." She was again banished, but returned in May 1660. Since her reprieve others, both colonists and visiting Friends, had brought themselves within the capital penalty, but the authorities had not ventured to enforce it. After ten days Endecott, at the bidding of the courts, sent for her, and asked her if she were the same Mary Dyer who had been there before. On her avowing this, the death sentence was passed and executed. Another Friend, William Leddra of Barbados, was executed on 14 March 1661.

#### The King's Missive, and Wenlock Christison's words

Others lay in prison awaiting sentence but were set at liberty, and a new law was passed substituting whipping out of the colony from town to town. Shortly after, the 'King's Missive' reached Boston and showed the royal disapproval of the policy of persecution. When the last Friend to be condemned to death (Wenlock Christison, afterwards released) had received his sentence, he had said:

Do not think to weary out the living God by taking away the lives of his servants. What do you gain by it? For the last man you put to death, here are five come in his room. And if you have power to take my life from me God can raise up the same principle of life in ten of His servants and send them among you in my room

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston\\_martyrs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_martyrs)

**Re: Boston martyrs - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/10/16 19:58**

THE TESTIMONY OF MARMADUKE STEVENSON

In the beginning of the year 1655, I was at the plough in the east parts of Yorkshire in Old England, near the place where my outward being was; and, as I walked after the plough, I was filled with the love and presence of the living God, which did ravish my heart when I felt it, for it did increase and abound in me like a living stream, so did the life and love of God run through me like precious ointment giving a pleasant smell, which mad me to stand still. And, as I stood a little still, with my heart and mind stayed upon the Lord, the word of the Lord came to me in a still, small voice, which I did hear perfectly, saying to me in the secret of my heart and conscience, "I have have ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," and, at the hearing of the word of the Lord, I was put to a stand, seeing that I was but a child for such a weighty matter. So, at the time appointed, Barbados was set before me, unto which I was required of the Lord to go and leave my dear and loving wife and tender children; for the Lord said unto me, immediately by His Spirit, that He would be as an husband to my wife and as a father to my children, and they should not want in my absence, for He would provide for them when I was gone. And I believed the Lord would perform what He had spoken, because I was made willing to give up myself to His work and service, to leave all and follow Him, whose presence and life is with me, where I rest in peace and quietness of spirit, with my dear brother under the shadow of His wings, who hath made us willing to lay down our lives for His name's sake, if unmerciful men be suffered to take them from us. And, if they do, we know we shall have rest and peace with the Lord for ever in His holy habitation, when they shall have torment night and day.

So, in obedience to the living God, I made preparation to pass to Barbados in the Fourth month 1658. So, after some time that I had been on the said island in the service of God, I heard that New England had made a law to put the servants of the living God to death if they returned after they were sentenced away, which did come near me at that time; and, as I considered the thing and pondered it in my heart, immediately came to word of the Lord unto me, saying, "Thou knowest not but that thou mayst go thither."

But I kept this word in my heart and did not declare it to any until the time appointed, so, after that, a vessel was made ready for Rhode Island, which I passed in. so, after a little time that I had been there, visiting the seed which the Lord had blessed, the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Go to Boston with thy brother William Robinson," and at His command I was obedient and gave up to His will, that so His work and service may be accomplished. for He had said unto me that He had a great work for me to do, which is now come to pass. And, for yielding obedience to and for obeying the voice and command of the everlasting God, which created heaven and earth and the foundations of waters, do I, with my dear brother, suffer outward bonds near unto death.

And this is given forth to be upon record, that all people may know who hear it, that we came not in our own will but in the will of God.

Given forth by me, whom am known to men by the name of MARMADUKE STEVENSON, but have a new name given me, which the world knows not of, written in the book of life. (Besse, Sufferings, 1753, vol. II., pp. 201, 202.)

<http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qwhp/marmduke.htm>

**Re: Boston martyrs - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/10/17 9:58**

A Memoir of William Leddra

Who Suffered Martyrdom in Boston, in 1661

William Leddra was one of four Quakers to die on the gallows, murdered by the Boston Puritans for being a Quaker. The Puritans were fundamentalist Christians, very rigid in their beliefs, depending on the Scriptures for rule and judgement, rather than the Holy Spirit. The Quakers had been very successful in England, often emptying entire churches of tithe-paying customers; so the Puritan priests of New England were very frightened of them. Since the Quakers told them that they must witness their salvation by seeing their savior within, the Puritans were incensed and outraged. They began banishing all Quakers. Then they began cruelly whipping all Quakers. Quakers still came, sent by God to save the people. So the Puritans next began to cut off the Quakers' ears, bore their tongues with a hot iron, and brand by hot iron them as heretics. The Quakers still came, sent by God to save the people. So the Quakers, without authority of the laws of England, made hanging till dead the next penalty. Two other men, William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson had already been hung, and the courageous Mary Dyer was also murdered on the gallows by the Puritans, who considered themselves to be very refined Christian gentlemen. The complete story of the Quaker sufferings in New England is available on this site.

To his true followers, Jesus said:

.. whoever kills you will think and claim that he has offered service to God.

John 16:2

And so the Early Quakers similarly suffered,  
as the Whore of Babylon Continued to Drink the Blood of the Saints.

Of the history of William Leddra previous to his joining in religious fellowship of the Quakers, very little is known. His home was in Barbados, but he is said to have been by birth a Cornishman; and his occupation, it appears, was that of a clothier. We find him engaged very early in visiting the West Indies as a minister, and in 1657 he proceeded in that character to New England. Christian constancy, and patient endurance under extreme sufferings for the cause of his Lord, remarkably distinguished William Leddra. Addressing his friends of New England, from Boston prison, a few weeks before his death, he says—

" I testify in the fear of the Lord God, and witness with a pen of trembling, that the noise of the whip on my back, all the imprisonments, and banishing upon pain of death, and after returning, the loud threatening of a halter from their mouths, did no more affright me, through the strength of the power of God, than if they had threatened to have bound a spider's web to my finger; which makes me to say with unfeigned lips—"Wait upon the Lord, O my soul, forever. I do not seek to withdraw my cheek from the smiter, nor to turn aside my feet from the footsteps of the flock, as witness this chain and his log at my leg; but I desire, as far as the Lord draws me, to follow my forefathers and brethren, in suffering and in joy; wherefore my spirit waits and worships at the feet of Immanuel, unto whom I commit my cause."

About the Third Month of this year, William Leddra, who had lately arrived at Rhode Island from Barbados, in company with Thomas Harris, also felt drawn to visit the colony of Connecticut. After having had some religious service there, he was arrested and banished, and subsequently returned to Rhode Island. About the middle of the Fourth Month 1658, William Leddra and nine other early Quakers number met on Rhode Island, but they were not permitted long to enjoy this favored retreat. On the 15th, William Brend, Thomas Harris, and William Leddra, proceeded northward for Massachusetts. William Brend and William Leddra then passed onwards to Salem.

Reaching Salem, William Brend and William Leddra were warmly welcomed by the few faithful Friends of that place, with whom they were favored to hold several meetings to their mutual refreshment and comfort. On First-day, the 20th of Fourth Month, they attended one held at the house of Nicholas Phelps, in the woods, about five miles from Salem. A magistrate of the town hearing of the intended meeting, came with a constable, for the purpose of breaking it up, and securing the two strangers; but failing in his purpose, he left the company, with a threat that he would prosecute the Friends who were present. From Salem the two gospel messengers traveled to Newburyport, where also they had some religious service. Their passing thus from place to place, in the very heart of the Puritan population of New England, and by their powerful ministry making converts to the doctrines they professed, aroused the fears of the local magistracy to this new state of things. After leaving Newburyport, they were soon overtaken by a zealous ruler of the place, who arrested them and carried them to Salem. The court, which was then sitting in the town, had the Friends brought up for examination. Here they were interrogated respecting the doctrines they were promulgating, but their answers were so clear and convincing, and they appealed so effectually to the consciences of the magistrates, that the latter confessed they discovered nothing heretical or dangerous in their opinions. The court, however, told the prisoners that they had a law against Quakers, and that law must be obeyed. An order for their committal immediately followed, and in a few days they were removed to Boston prison. Six Friends of Salem were also committed for having attended the meeting at the house of Nicholas Phelps.

William Brend and William Leddra, who were deemed special offenders, were separated from their companions. They were placed in a miserable cell, the window of which was so stopped, as not only to deprive them of light, but also of ventilation, while all conversation between them and the citizens was strictly forbidden. The jailer, following the cruel course which he had pursued towards Thomas Harris, refused to allow them an opportunity of purchasing food, though they offered to pay for it. But he told them, it was not their money, but their labor he desired. Thus he kept them five days without food, and then with a three-corded whip gave them twenty blows. An hour after he told them, they might go out, if they would pay the marshal that was to lead them out of the country. They judging it very unreasonable to pay money for being banished, refused this, but yet said, that if the prison-door was set open, they would go away. The next day the jailer came to W. Brend, a man in years, and put him in irons, neck and heels so close together, that there was no more room left between each, than for the lock that fastened them. Thus he kept them from five in the morning, till after nine at night, b

eing the space of sixteen hours. The next morning he brought him to the mill to work, but Brend refusing, the jailer took a pitched rope about an inch thick, and gave him twenty blows over his back and arms, with as much force as he could, so that the rope untwisted; and then, going away, he came again with another rope, that was thicker and stronger, and told Brend, that he would cause him to bow to the law of the country, and make him work. Brend judged this not only unreasonable in the highest degree, since he had committed no evil, but he was also altogether unable to work for he lacked strength for want of food, having been kept five days without eating, and whipped also, and now thus unmercifully beaten with a rope. But this inhuman jailer relented not, but began to beat anew with his pitched rope on this bruised body, and foaming at his mouth like a madman, with violence laid ninety-seven more blows on him, as other prisoners that beheld it with compassion, have told; and if his strength, and his rope had not failed him, he would have laid on more; he threatened also to give him the next morning as many blows more. But a higher power, who sets limits even to the raging sea, and has said, "to here you shall come, but no further," also limited this butcherly fellow; who was yet impudently stout enough to say his morning prayer. To what a most terrible condition these blows brought the body of Brend, who because of the great heat of the weather, had nothing but a serge cassock upon his shirt, may easily be conceived. His back and arms were bruised and black, and the blood hanging as in bags under his arms; and so into one was his flesh beaten, that at the sign of a particular blow could not be seen; for all was become as a jelly. His body being thus cruelly tortured, he lay down upon the boards, so extremely weakened, that the natural parts decaying, and strength quite failing, his body turned cold. There seemed as it were a struggle between life and death; 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. Now, the noise of this cruelty spread among the people in the town, and caused such a cry, that the governor sent his surgeon to the prison to see what might be done; but the surgeon found the body of Brend in such a deplorable condition, that, as one without hopes, he said, his flesh would rot from off his bones, before the bruised parts could be brought to digest. This so exasperated the people, that the magistrates, to prevent a tumult, set up a paper on their meeting-house door, and up and down the streets, as it were to show their dislike of this abominable, and most barbarous cruelty; and said, the jailer should be dealt withal the next court. But this paper was soon taken down again upon the instigation of the high priest, John Norton, who, having from the beginning been a fierce promoter of the persecution, now did not hesitate to say, "W. Brend endeavored to beat our gospel ordinances black and blue, if he then be beaten black and blue, it is but just upon him; and I will appear in his behalf that did so." It is therefore not much to be wondered at, that these precise and bigoted magistrates, who would be looked upon to be eminent for piety, were so cruel in persecuting, since their chief teacher thus wickedly encouraged them to it.

It happened about this time, that some of the people called Quakers that lived there were brought before the magistrates. One of them challenged the magistrates, asking how they might know who was a Quaker; to which Simon Broadstreet, one of the magistrates, answered, "You are one, for coming in with your hat on." Which made the other reply, it was a horrible thing to make such cruel laws, to whip and cut off ears, and bore through the tongue, for not putting off the hat. Then one of the bench said, that the Quakers held forth blasphemies at their meetings. To which one of the others asked him to prove the assertion, considering that it had pleased God to miraculously to heal W. Brend and to keep him alive. As though this hardened the hearts of these persecutors, to show themselves obedient followers of their teacher, they produced an order for the jailer; which was if the Quakers that were in his custody refused to work, he should whip them twice a week, the first time with ten lashes, the next time with fifteen, and so at each time with three more, till they would work. This was performed on four persons, one of which was William Leddra. To keep the passionate jailer within due bounds, it was ordered that each time he should warn two constables to see the execution. But how little moderation was truly meant, and that this was more like a jest, may appear in that the jailer the first time laid fifteen lashes each on the said persons, and so added five stripes to the first number of lashings.

In the Fourth Month, 1659, William Leddra, and Peter Pearson, while traveling in gospel labors in that colony, were arrested, and imprisoned for ten months at Plymouth. The following extract from a letter written by Peter Pearson during his imprisonment, gives a few particulars of the movements of himself and some of his friends prior to his arrest.

Upon the Ninth-day of the Fourth Month, 1659, the Fourth-day of the week, all of us English Friends that were abroad in this country, had a meeting upon Rhode Island. The Sixth-day following, at a Ferry side, upon Rhode Island, one Friend, William Leddra, and I, parted with Christopher Holder, Marmaduke Stevenson, and William Robinson. We were about to pass over the ferry to travel into this part of the country called Plymouth colony At the end of two days' journey we came to a town therein called Sandwich, and the day following had a pretty peaceable meeting. We planned that if we escaped apprehension in this colony, we were going to travel into Boston's jurisdiction; but in the second meeting that we had at Sandwich, we were apprehended, and had before the governor and magistrates, and by them committed to this prison, where we have remained five months and upward."

Peter Pearson

Written in Plymouth prison, in New England, the 6th of the Tenth Month, 1659.

The rulers of the colony of Plymouth, though not so severe in their measures for oppressing Friends, as their neighbors of Boston, continued, nevertheless, to harass them by heavy fines, for the non-attendance of meetings. Thomas Ewer of Sandwich, in addition to severe distrains, was laid neck and heels together, for reproving his persecutors, for these unjust proceedings. Peter Pearson and William Leddra, who were committed to Plymouth jail, in the Fourth Month of 1659, did not obtain their liberty until the early part of the following year; the period of their imprisonment, being more prolonged than that of any Friend who suffered in New England.

Among those imprisoned at Boston in the Tenth Month, 1660, was William Leddra, who had returned to the city, after having been exiled on pain of death. This faithful man appears to have been in no ordinary degree the object of Puritan displeasure. During his former imprisonment at Boston, the sufferings to which he was subjected had been so extreme that his life was endangered. On the present occasion, he was fettered to a log of wood, being chained night and day in an open prison; and that, also, during the severities of a New England winter. His persecutors would probably have been glad, had these inhumanities put an end to his existence; but it pleased Divine Providence to support him through them.

On the 9th of the First Month, 1661, he was again brought before the Court of Assistants. Thus arraigned, with the chains about him, and still bound to the log, he was told that having returned after sentence of banishment, he had incurred the penalty of death. On hearing this, the sufferer asked what evil he had done? The Court replied, he had owned those that were put to death; had refused to put off his hat in court, and said thee and thou. He then asked them if they would put him to death for speaking English, and for not putting off his clothes? To this, one of the magistrates made the absurd reply, "A man may speak treason in English." William Leddra then inquired if "it was treason to say thee and thou to a single person." Broadstreet, a violent persecuting magistrate, now undertook to question the prisoner, and asked him "If he would go to England." He replied that he had no business in England. Then, said Broadstreet, significantly pointing to Boston Common, "You shall go that way." "What," replied William Leddra, "will you put me to death for breathing in the air of your jurisdiction? What have you against me? I appeal to the laws of England for my trial. If by them I am found guilty, I refuse not to die." The arbitrary Court, however, overruled his appeal; and then, like some other persecutors of old, endeavored to persuade him to recant, and conform to their own religion. The wretched attempt was at once rejected, and rejected, too, with magnanimity and disdain. "What! Join with such murderers as you are," said William Leddra; "then let every man that meets me say, 'Lo, this is the man that has forsaken the God of his salvation.'"

The Court, finding their victim unshaken in his religious convictions, passed the sentence of death upon him, and appointed the 14th of the month for its execution. On this day it was also arranged that a morning lecture should be given; and now, as on the former occasions, the officiating minister exerted his eloquence, to urge the magistracy onward in their dreadful work. "Priests," writes a contemporary, "served to whet them on." The lecture, or, as a modern writer terms it, "this shocking preamble to the execution," being concluded, the governor, with a guard of soldiers, proceeded to the prison. Here the irons that had long hung on William Leddra were knocked off, and, taking a solemn farewell of his imprisoned companions, he "went forth to the slaughter in the meekness of the spirit of Jesus." On leaving the prison walls, he was immediately surrounded by the soldiery, with a view to prevent him from speaking to his friends. Edward Wharton, observing the maneuver, exclaimed that it was worse than the conduct of Bonnets men. "What," said he, "will you not let me come near my suffering friend before you kill him." One of the company replied that "it would be his turn next;" and an officer threatened to stop his mouth, if he spoke another word.

The procession was similar in character to those before-mentioned; and having reached the place of execution, William Leddra exhorted his friend, Edward Wharton, to faithfulness, and told him a final farewell, saying, "All that will be Christ's disciples must take up his cross." While standing on the ladder, some one having called out, "William, have you anything to say to the people?" he replied, "For bearing my testimony for the Lord against the deceivers and deceived, am I brought here to suffer." These expressions, together with the heavenly mindedness which he manifested at this awful period, awakened the tender feelings of many of the spectators, in a manner that conveyed keen reproof to the instigators of the revolting scene. The ministers observed the manifestation of this feeling with uneasiness; and Allen, who was one of them, with a view to check the current of sympathy, said, loudly, "People, I would not have you think it strange to see a man so willing to die, for it is no new thing; you may read how the apostle said, that some shall be given up to many delusions, and even dare to die for it." Truly, the apostle said that many should be given up to delusions; but the persecuting priest committed a great error, when he quoted the apostle as saying that such should dare to die for them.

The executioner now proceeded to complete his work. While the hangman's noose was being adjusted, the martyr meek

ly and resignedly said, "I commend my righteous cause unto you, O God." As the ladder was turning, his last expression was, "Lord, Jesus! Receive my spirit." The body, on being cut down, was allowed to be removed by his friends for interment; this, however, would not have been granted, but for the outcry of the people against the barbarous indecencies exhibited to the remains of the former victims.

Before the execution, it was currently reported that William Leddra had liberty to leave the prison, and to save his life. This was a gross falsehood, propagated, doubtless, with a view to lessen the odiousness of the wicked proceedings. There was a stranger present, who was much affected on witnessing the scene. A letter addressed by him to a friend at Barbados, alluding to this report, and describing the execution, has been preserved, and will be read with interest.

Boston, March 26, 1661.

On the 14th of this instant, one William Leddra was put to death here. The people of the town told me, he might go away if he would; but when I made further inquiry, I heard the marshal say that he was chained in prison, from the time he was condemned, to the day of his execution. I am not of his opinion; but yet, truly, I thought the Lord did mightily appear in the man. I went to one of the magistrates of Cambridge, who had been of the jury that condemned him, as he told me himself; and I asked him by what rule he did it? He answered me, that he was a rogue, a very rogue. But what is this to the question, I said, where is your rule? He said, he had abused authority. Then I went after the man, and asked him, whether he did not look on it as a breach of rule to slight and undervalue authority? And I said that Paul gave Festus the title of honor, though he was a heathen. (I do not mean to say these magistrates are heathens). When the man was on the ladder, he looked on me and called me friend, and said, "know that this day I am willing to offer up my life for the witness of Jesus." Then I desired leave of the officers to speak, and said, "gentlemen, I am a stranger both to your persons and country, yet a friend of both:" and I cried aloud, for the Lord's sake, take not away the man's life; but remember Gamaliel's counsel to the Jews—"If it is of man, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it: but be careful you are not found fighting against God." And the captain said, why had you not come to the prison? The reason was, because I heard the man might go if he would; and therefore I called him down from the tree, and said, come down, William, you may go away if you will. Then Captain Oliver said it was no such matter; and asked me what I had to do with it; and told me to be gone. I told them I was willing, for I could not endure to see this. When I was in the town, some did seem to sympathize with me in my grief. I told them, they had no warrant from the Bible, nor precedent from our country, nor power from his Majesty, to hang the man. I rest your friend,

Thomas Wilkie

To Mr. George Lad, master of the America, of Dartmouth, now at Barbados.

The state of William Leddra's mind, in anticipation of his death, may be truly called a triumphant one. The heavenly enjoyments which he was permitted to experience, and the foretaste he had of a glorious immortality, were such as are rarely vouchsafed to humanity. On the day preceding his execution, he wrote the following:—

TO THE SOCIETY OF THE LITTLE FLOCK OF CHRIST

Grace and Peace be multiplied.

MOST DEAR AND INWARDLY BELOVED!

The sweet influences of the morning star, like a flood, distilling into my habitation, have so filled me with the joy of the Lord in the beauty of holiness, that my spirit is as if it did not inhabit a tabernacle of clay, but is wholly swallowed up in the bosom of eternity, from where it had its being.

Alas! Alas! what can the wrath and spirit of man that lusts to envy, aggravated by the heat and strength of the king of the locusts which came out of the pit, do to one that is hidden in the secrets of the Almighty, or to them that are gathered under the healing wings of the Prince of Peace? Under whose armor of light they shall be able to stand in the day of trial; having on the breastplate of righteousness and the sword of the Spirit, which is their weapon of war against spiritual wickedness, principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, both within and without.

Oh, my beloved! I have waited like a dove at the windows of the ark; and have stood still in that watch, which the Master, without whom I could do nothing, did at his coming reward with the fullness of his love; wherein my heart did rejoice, that I might, in the love and life of God, speak a few words to you, sealed with the spirit of promise; that the taste of it might be a savor of life to your life, and a testimony in you of my innocent death. And if I had been altogether silent, and the Lord had not opened my mouth to you, yet he would have opened your hearts, and there have sealed my innocence with the streams of life, by which we are all baptized into that body which is of God, with whom and in whose presence there is life; in which as you abide, you stand upon the pillar and ground of truth. For the life being the truth and the way, go not one step without it, lest you should compass a mountain in the wilderness; for to everything there is a season.

As the flowing of the ocean fills every creek and branch thereof, and then retires again towards its own being and fullness, and leaves a savor behind it; so does the life and virtue of God flow into every one of your hearts, whom He has made partakers of his Divine nature; and when it withdraws but a little, it leaves a sweet savor behind it, that many can say they are made clean through the word that He has spoken to them; in which innocent condition you may see what you are in the presence of God, and what you are without Him.

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. Eph 5:26  
(This speaks of the word within, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." Rom 10:8.  
As you hear, listen, and obey the words - you are made clean )

Therefore, my dear hearts, let the enjoyment of life alone be your hope, your joy and consolation; and let the man of God flee those things that would lead the mind out of the cross, for then the savor of life will be buried. And although some may speak of things they received in the life, as experiences, yet the life being veiled, and the savor that is left being washed away by the fresh floods of temptation, the condition that they enjoyed in the life, though boasted of by the airy spirit, will be like the manna that was gathered yesterday, without any good scent or savor. For, it is well with the man only while he is in the life of innocence; but being driven from the presence\* of the Lord into the earth, what can he boast of?

{Leddra is saying, that unless we are in the presence of God, we without redemption. Seek His face and to be in His presence continually. 1 Chr 16:11. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Mat 5:8}

And though you know these things, and many of you, much more than I can say; yet for the love and zeal I bear to the truth and honor of God, and the tender desire of my soul to those that are young, that they may read me in that from which I write,\* to strengthen them against the wiles of the subtle serpent that beguiled Eve. I say, stand and watch within, in the fear of the Lord, which is the very entrance of wisdom, and the state where you are ready to receive the secrets of the Lord. Hunger and thirst patiently, be not weary, neither doubt. Stand still, and cease from your own works, and in due time you shall enter the rest, and your eyes shall behold his salvation, whose testimonies are sure and righteous altogether. Let them be as a seal upon your arm, and as jewels around your neck, that others may see what the Lord has done for your souls. Confess him before men, yes, before his greatest enemies; fear not what they can do to you; greater is he that is within you, than he that is in the world. He will clothe you with humility, and in the power of his meekness you shall reign over all the rage of your enemies, in the favor of God; in which, as you stand in the faith, you are the salt of the earth; for many, seeing your good works, may glorify God in the day of their visitation.

\*in that from which I write - is the presence of God, in the Kingdom.

Take heed of receiving that which you have not seen in the light, for fear you listen to the enemy. Bring all things to the light, that they may be proved, whether they are wrought in God; the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, are outside the light, in the world; therefore possess your vessels in all sanctification and honor, and let your eyes look at the mark, . He that has called you is holy; and if there is an eye that offends, pluck it out and cast it from you. Let not a temptation take hold, for if you do, it will keep you from the favor of God, and will be a sad state. For, without grace possessed there is no assurance of salvation. By grace you are saved; and the witnessing of it is sufficient for you; to which I commend you all, my dear friends, and in it remain, your brother,

William Leddra

Boston Jail, the 13th of the First Month, 1661

<http://www.hallvorthington.com/Leddra.html>