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I

Crisis, 1659–1660

Introduction to Parts I and II: London and the nation

LONDON AND THE CRISIS OF 1659–1660

When Charles II processed through the city of London on 29 May 1660, upon his return to England, the occasion marked more than a personal triumph for a king who had suffered a decade of political frustration after the execution of his father and the abolition of monarchy. Charles's return to the kingdom after years of exile and hardship was also a political and emotional catharsis for a city that had contributed more than any other locality to the collapse of Stuart monarchy in the 1640s. Charles's route was crowded and lined by the civic militia and by thousands of citizens drawn up in their guilds. The streets were hung with tapestries, pennants, banners, and spring flowers; and wine was said to be flowing in every conduit and fountain. The king's appearance was greeted by "such shouting as the oldest man alive never heard"; and this celebratory din was increased by the ringing of church bells and by the many trumpets and drums in the royal procession.¹ Charles required four hours to pass through the city and Westminster to Whitehall, and popular rejoicing continued for another three days and nights.²

The new king was well aware of the ironies of this frenzied London reception. Surely this could not have been the same city in which, less than a generation earlier, puritan crowds had competed with the parliamentary leadership in driving "reformation and liberty" at the expense of episcopacy and monarchy. The civic magistrates, liverymen, militia bands, and apprentices who greeted Charles II included many who had supported the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell in 1653–8 and others who had backed the Commonwealth of 1649–53. Yet here they were, and mingled with them

¹ *The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg 1659–61*, ed. W. L. Sachse (1961), 89–90.

² Additional accounts of the king's procession through London include: *CSPVen 1659–61*, p. 155; *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke*, ed. R. Spalding (Oxford, 1990), pp. 588–9; *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. De Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955), III, 246; *HMC Fifth Report*, pp. 167, 184. Also see, Sir Richard Baker, *A Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1665), p. 777; Thomas Gumble, *The Life of General Monck* (1671), 388–92, reprinted in *OPH*, XXII, 321–3.

were many others who had opposed the political course of Charles I in the 1630s but had found parliament's course, by 1642, even more unacceptable.

Such distinctions were less in evidence in London on 29 May 1660 than the almost universal hope for a healing of the nation's divisions. Charles's arrival in the capital, eagerly awaited for several weeks, marked the end of one of the most astonishing years London and its citizens had ever experienced. In September 1658, Richard Cromwell had quietly succeeded as Lord Protector upon the death of his father. The Venetian ambassador, who expected no end of trouble upon Oliver's death, had been astonished by the ease with which the city and the country accepted Richard.³ But in April 1659, the leadership of the New Model Army had overthrown Richard and his parliament, which had been elected, as before 1640, by the counties and enfranchised boroughs. The generals and officers were supported in this action by republican intellectuals and politicians, by the gathered churches, and by many of the Baptist and Independent clergy, including, most notably, Dr John Owen. The 1659 coup put an end to the transformation, initiated by Oliver, of the English republic into a polity more similar to the country's "ancient constitution." Suddenly, revolution and "the good old cause" replaced Cromwellian efforts at "restoration" and settlement. Within days, the army recalled the Rump, the remnant of the Long Parliament that had sat in 1649–53, to govern from Westminster. The republic was back in business.

Under the most favorable circumstances, the army's action would have proven divisive; but the circumstances were not at all favorable. The country had been at war with Spain since 1655, and the war had accomplished little other than the disruption of the city's trade and the expansion of the government's debt. Money was scarce; food prices were high; prices for cloth and other export goods had fallen; and shipping losses to privateers were extensive. The political uncertainty of 1659 thus coincided with an economic depression that would have made the collection of taxes difficult for any regime. Neither the unrepresentative nature of the parliament at Westminster after April 1659 nor its installation through naked military force counted in its favor.⁴

The result was another grand crisis of church and state in which the nation confronted again some of the issues that had provoked civil war in 1642 and revolution in 1649. The status of parliament was again in doubt, as was the security of the Protestant church establishment. The city quarreled with the new government. Many common councilmen and aldermen perceived it

³ CSPVen 1657–9, p. 248.

⁴ W. R. Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 260–2; M. Ashley, *Financial and Commercial Policy under the Cromwellian Protectorate* (1962), pp. 44–5, 143–6, 174–8.

as a nothing more than an illegitimate clique of aging politicians who had usurped the place of the genuine national parliament elected under Richard. For its part, the Rump showed little regard either for the city's conventional rights and liberties or for the civic charter that guaranteed them. But as inadequate as it was, the Rump was at least the semblance of a parliament. After a second coup in October 1659, in which the army dumped the Rump, the city and the nation experienced a thinly disguised form of military rule. Opposition to this development seemed inexorably to be leading once again to civil war.

Outside London, in late autumn 1659, a movement developed on behalf of freely electing a new parliament. County gentry and borough leaders who aided this movement looked to the city to take the lead in stopping the army. Supporters of the displaced Rump, on the other hand, claimed that it alone could resettle the nation. Within London, the army confronted anxious magistrates and common councilmen as well as restless apprentices. In 1659, as in the early 1640s, the apprentices ardently supported civic liberties and parliamentary government. In the meantime, the enigmatic commander of the Scottish forces, General George Monck, began his slow progress to the south. By the end of the year, the Rump had re-established itself against the army; but the Corporation of London had proceeded to open rebellion, refusing to pay taxes, encouraging other boroughs to follow its lead, and preparing to defend itself, by arms if necessary, against all threats to its autonomy.

The crisis of 1659–60 was, then, a crisis about parliamentary government. It was also a crisis about Protestantism. Having freed the national church of diocesan episcopacy, Reformed Protestants had eventually embraced Cromwell's regime and his church order, with some misgivings on the part of Presbyterians, as safeguarding public Protestant ministry from the proliferating sects.⁵ But in 1659 the army was again acting with those who demanded complete liberty of conscience outside the church and who wished to see the parochial establishment stripped of such resources as tithes. The sects – especially the Quakers – seemed again to be overrunning the land. Both the army's enemies in the city and General Monck in Scotland were as disturbed by this revival of militant sectarianism as they were by the army's making and unmaking of parliaments. On occasion, panic about the “sec-tar-ies” became distinctly reminiscent of the fears of popish massacres that had accompanied the breakdown of 1640–42, and one historian has likened

⁵ In this study, “Reformed Protestantism” refers to Presbyterians, Independents, and other Protestants whose theology and ecclesiology were informed by the European Reformed or Calvinist tradition. “Anglican” refers to those English Protestants who strongly preferred diocesan episcopal governance for the national church and who were generally less influenced by the continental Reformed heritage.

the fear of the sects in 1659 to the *Grande Peur* of 1789.⁶ Moreover, in the minds of some Reformed Protestants, the threats from popery and sectarianism were related.⁷ Ironically, just as the desire for parliamentary government drove some of Charles I's old enemies toward his son, so the fear of sectarianism put many Reformed Protestants on common ground with those who had never truly abandoned the episcopal office and the old Anglican order.

THE CORPORATION OF LONDON IN THE CIVIL WAR AND INTERREGNUM

In London, the crisis of 1659-60 was deeply rooted in the city's civil and religious experiences since 1640. Adjacent to the seat of national government at Westminster, London and its citizens occupied a unique position in England's affairs. With a population that exceeded 375,000, London was the nation's metropolis, and it dwarfed all English provincial towns in size. Perhaps 135,000 of its residents lived within the city proper, the area that made up the Corporation of London, the focus of this study.⁸

But the centrality of London to English affairs was more than a matter of its large population. Its active merchants, who probably numbered about 800-1,000 by mid-century, were at the forefront of English overseas trade and investment. Their commerce made the city a national entrepôt, and the success of their trade was a critical matter in increasing customs revenues as well. The East India Company, the great national joint stock, was a London stock: its governing committee was largely made up of London men. Although the English universities were located elsewhere, London was nevertheless an intellectual capital, the center of national publication and print distribution and a Mecca for clergy in pursuit of well-endowed pulpits. The seasonal influx of the nobility and the gentry, who were attracted by the Court and by parliamentary and legal sessions, also made London the center of national fashion, of the theatre, and of the arts. Finally, and most importantly, London had a greater capacity for producing and exporting disorder than any other locality: its assertive and highly literate citizens and apprentices were well informed about issues of church and state and eager to make their voices heard.⁹

The political institutions of the Corporation of London were those of a participatory guild society in which magistrates enjoyed significant prerogatives as representatives of the crown. Guildhall and Whitehall traditionally

⁶ B. Reay, *Quakers and English Revolution* (1985), p. 100.

⁷ Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth*, ed. W. Lamont (Cambridge, 1994), pp. xvii-xix.

⁸ The remainder made up the populations of the incorporated boroughs of Westminster and Southwark and of the urban parishes of the counties of Middlesex and Surrey.

⁹ For London's centrality, see esp., *The Making of the Metropolis: London 1500-1700*, ed. A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (1986) and *London and the Civil War*, ed. S. Porter (1996).

operated as paired forces for order in the heavily intertwined microcosm and macrocosm that they governed. Yet, after 1640, magisterial authority declined as aroused citizens and their elected representatives assumed greater voice in civic affairs. In the early 1640s, parliamentary puritans contested for power in the city with a governing Anglican loyalist elite and gained the initiative in civic affairs by 1642–3.¹⁰ The political and religious skirmishes that began in London in the early 1640s would continue into the early Hanoverian era as civic divisions about the ideal religious and political settlement of the nation persisted. The institutions of the Corporation, which will be introduced here, especially lent themselves to disagreement and unsettlement.

The city's 234 common councilmen were chosen in its twenty-six wards (Figure 6.2) at the annual wardmotes on 21 December. These assemblies were open to the resident householders of each ward whose freedom of the Corporation and one of its guilds entitled them to practice their regulated trades. The urban population included some 20,000 such resident freemen. The court of common council functioned as the city's legislature and constituted the largest elected assembly in England, other than the House of Commons. Summoned ordinarily by the lord mayor for only five or six annual meetings of a few hours' duration, the common councilmen could become both factious and independent; and they certainly did so after 1640. The 1640s witnessed much institutional tension between the common councilmen and the twenty-six magistrates who met one or twice a week as the court of aldermen.¹¹

The aldermen attended to a host of administrative duties and decisions and were also responsible to the regime for the city's good order. Several were justices of the peace; and each of them presided over the affairs of their wards, including the annual wardmotes. Six of them were generally commanders of the London trained bands, and most of the others were included in the London lieutenancy commission. Members of common council *ex officio*, they voted separately, and a few of them sat on all common council committees. Their consent was required for the adoption of civic by-laws. The aldermen were chosen for life in a complicated electoral formula.¹² Their long-term tenure and the high wealth requirement for office (£10,000) strongly inclined them toward order and authority.

¹⁰ V. Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1961).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53–8; I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 30–2; K. Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 180–97.

¹² In the event of an aldermanic vacancy, ward householders submitted four names (two commoners and two senior aldermen) to the full court of aldermen. The court then permitted one of its senior members to transfer to the ward, elevated one of the commoners to their ranks, or rejected the entire submission and requested a new one.

The aldermen generally succeeded to the office of lord mayor according to their seniority, functioned as the city's chief magistrate for a year, and thereafter enriched the aldermanic bench with their mayoral experience. The office of lord mayor was both an honor and a burden, since the government expected the lord mayor to act on its behalf. The lord mayor regularly met with the principal officers of the realm, including (before 1640) both the Privy Council and the monarch himself, in order to ensure the security of the urban area. Indeed, the lord mayor ranked next to privy councilors in the hierarchy of the state. He presided at the court of aldermen and the court of common council. As the principal officer of justice in the Corporation, he also kept his own judicial court and presided over others.¹³

Contemporary explanations of London's governing structures, both before 1648–9 and after 1660, often referred to the relationship of the lord mayor, aldermen, and common councilmen as analogous to that of the king, lords, and commons. But the analogy was misleading, for it ignored an important electoral assembly, important officers of the Corporation, and the charter that incorporated the city and prescribed these institutional relationships and procedures. The overlooked assembly was the court of common hall, which was open to those freemen who had obtained the livery of their guild companies through their business success or long-term service. These 5,000–6,000 liverymen not only dominated the affairs of their companies but also possessed the franchise for the election of London's four members of the House of Commons. They also assembled twice yearly for the elections of the two Sheriffs of London and Middlesex on 24 June and the lord mayor on 29 September.

These common hall elections combined electoral right and magisterial prerogative in a confusing manner, however. The lord mayor claimed a right to "elect" one of the two sheriffs prior to 24 June, leaving the liverymen free to choose only one sheriff and to confirm the mayor's selection of the other. Moreover, junior aldermen expected the liverymen to elect them to the shrievalty soon after joining the court of aldermen, and they expected to be chosen lord mayor by the common hall in the order of their seniority. Indeed, the liverymen were expected to forward the names of two junior aldermen to the court of aldermen on 29 September, leaving the ultimate choice of a new lord mayor to the aldermen themselves.¹⁴

¹³ Pearl, *London*, pp. 62–4.

¹⁴ The number of liverymen grew throughout the seventeenth century. Pearl and Lindley accept a contemporary estimate of 4,000 liverymen in 1641. By the 1680s, the liverymen numbered about 6,500; and by 1700, their numbers exceeded 8,000. The liverymen also elected the chamberlain, the Corporation's chief financial officer on 24 June. But the incumbent chamberlain could expect to be continued in office from year to year, as long as his conduct was acceptable. Pearl, *London*, pp. 50–3, 65–6; Lindley, *Popular Politics*, p. 169; G. S. De Krey, *A Fractured Society: The Politics of London in the First Age of Party, 1688–1715* (Oxford, 1985), p. 41n.

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The inherent conflict between electoral choice and magisterial expectations in these elections was not always realized. Nevertheless, both the large numbers of people present in common hall and the frequent importation of external issues into civic elections could produce rowdiness and defiance of the lord mayor and aldermen, who ordinarily guided the actions of the liverymen. When such disorder occurred, it was also a matter of concern to the regime, which had its own interest in the election of the city's principal officers. Just as much as the sheriffs the crown appointed for counties throughout the realm, for instance, the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex were essential intermediaries between central and local government. And the government generally perceived any departure from the customary succession to the mayoralty as a violation of the hierarchical principles that safeguarded political and social order. After 1640, disagreements about the choice of civic magistrates did frequently occur in common hall. Moreover, as parliament and Charles I confronted each other, first at Westminster, and then in the field, common hall assumed more deliberative functions like considering petitions and hearing appeals from both Charles and the MPs.¹⁵

Finally, nothing was more important to the citizens of London than the charter in which their "rights and privileges" were anchored. Few of them had read the charter or would have known where to locate it. It had a history, but few even of the London magistrates could have traced that history with any precision. There had, in fact, been many charters of London over the centuries, as the crown, parliament, and civic spokesmen had negotiated the jurisdiction of the city government and its relationship to the regime, most recently in 1638–40. But "the charter" had achieved mythic significance as the repository of the electoral and commercial rights of the citizens. Frequent rhetorical references to it summoned up collective memories of the long recognition, by kings and parliaments alike, of the city's self-governing corporate status.¹⁶

London citizens were zealous in defense of their local self-government through all the institutions mentioned here. Moreover, the issues of the 1640s further stimulated the active participation of the London freemen in both local and national affairs. Cautious London magistrates who identified with the crown in the early 1640s, as well as those who were hostile to the New Model Army in the late 1640s, ran afoul of widespread fears that the exercise of popular rights was in jeopardy.¹⁷ When the army reconstituted the state in 1648–9, purging parliament and eliminating monarchy and the House of Lords, the Corporation of London experienced its own internal

¹⁵ Pearl, *London*, pp. 120–5; Lindley, *Popular Politics*, pp. 169–80.

¹⁶ Pearl, *London*, pp. 22–3, 27–8, 49, 80–8; Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 22, 26, 38.

¹⁷ I. Gentles, "The Struggle for London in the Second Civil War," *HJ* 26 (1983), 277–305; I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645–1653* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 177–80, 190–7.

anti-magisterial revolution, one that was intended to recover and to secure the liberties of London freemen.

Both the national and urban revolutions of 1649 are best considered in light of the simultaneous fragmentation of parliamentary puritanism. Liberty for conscience was the principal issue that splintered the movement for reformation of the national church in the 1640s and that would sustain English Protestant division for two generations thereafter. Liberty for conscience was a major contributor to the separation of “Independents” from “Presbyterians” in the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1644–5; and it was an issue that handicapped the new parliamentary church establishment from the beginning. Presbyterian supporters of the Solemn League and Covenant generally saw reformation as a collective obligation to God that required the maintenance of a national church, with uniformity in parish practices, modeled upon the best Reformed Protestant churches abroad. But London Independent clerics like John Owen, Joseph Caryl, and Philip Nye disagreed. They maintained instead that reformation required the acceptance of diversity within a loose national church, as individuals and local congregations exercised a liberty of conscience – bounded by obedience to God and to the magistrate – in determining their Christian practice.

The Independent understanding of the rights of conscience was not as expansive as that of separatists like Roger Williams and John Milton or of the Leveller movement. Independents left the Christian magistrate with important powers in protecting and promoting orthodox teaching. Nevertheless, the Independents had opened the door to wider claims for conscience by articulating arguments that separatists would employ to defend complete freedom from a national church order.¹⁸ By the late 1640s, the cause of reformation, which had once been the rallying cry of parliamentary puritanism, had been splintered by conflicting Protestant agendas. Presbyterians insisted that the church and the state retained a coercive responsibility to persuade believers about which doctrines and practices were acceptable to God, while Independents and growing numbers of separatists insisted that the gospel alone should guide the individual Christian conscience.

¹⁸ For Independent language about conscience and coercion, see *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience, tenderly Stated, modestly Asserted, and mildly Vindicated* (1645); Joseph Caryl, *Englands Plus Ultra, both of hoped Mercies, and of Required Duties* (1646); [William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughes, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and Sidrach Simpson], *An Apologetical Narration* (1644); John Owen, *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons . . . with a Discourse about Toleration* (1649). For the separatist position, see Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644); John Milton, *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659); M. Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616–1649* (Cambridge, 1977). This brief treatment differs strongly from that presented by A. Zakai, “Religious Toleration and its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War,” *Albion* 21 (1989), 1–33.

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The revolution carried out by the New Model Army in 1648–9 proved to be a revolution in which the advocates of conscience freed themselves not only from the old order in the state but also from the new order in the church. Most MPs who had supported a uniform Protestant church order were purged from parliament by the army. The revolution encouraged the growth of old and new sects alike by releasing Independents and separatists from the constraints that maintained conformity; and it left the clerical advocates of the newly reformed church establishment deeply distressed about the country's religious future.

In the city, the army's friends initiated a popular restructuring of the institutions of government. New qualifications for office-holding led to an unprecedented turnover on common council for 1648–9. Several Presbyterian aldermen bound by the Solemn League and Covenant to the preservation of monarchy were discharged from civic office, just as Presbyterian MPs had been removed from parliament. An obliging parliamentary Rump also provided for the emancipation of common council, which met over thirty times in 1649, free from mayoral and magisterial restraint. A statute of 28 February 1649 required a meeting of common council upon the request of any ten members, provided for the election of a common council chairman in the case the lord mayor declined to preside, eliminated the aldermanic veto over by-laws, and ensured that common council could be dissolved only by its own consent.¹⁹ Magisterial authority in the city had been compromised in ways that would be remembered long after 1660.

This civic revolution had commercial and social implications as well. A body of prominent Presbyterian merchants, who had successfully challenged the city's Anglican elite earlier in the 1640s, and who were firmly anchored in such trading concerns as the East India Company and the Levant Company, was pushed aside. A body of colonial and interloping merchants assumed civic leadership: they were "new men" who had chaffed against the monopolies of such companies and who now hoped for freer trade. Largely Independent or separatist, they were the Rump's natural civic allies, the supporters of its 1651 Navigation Act and of the commercial war it began against the Dutch in 1652. Their republicanism was as piecemeal as that of the Rump, which fashioned a commonwealth out of bits and pieces of the old order. But just as the Rump fell short in the eyes of some of the sects and of the Levellers, so the new civic regime fell short in the eyes of

¹⁹ Journal 40, fols. 312–313; *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (1911), III, cxi–cxii; M. James, *Social Problems and Policy during the Puritan Revolution 1649–1660* (1930, 1966), pp. 223–40; J. E. Farnell, "The Politics of the City of London (1649–1657)," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1963, chs. 4–5; R. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 543–8.