

# CROMWELL'S OATH OF LOYALTY

Gaybon Goddard, Member of Parliament for Castle Rising (1659)

Tuesday, 12 September 1654<sup>[OS]</sup>

This morning news was brought to the Herald's Office, where I lay with my brother Bish, that the Parliament House was dissolved and that, for certain, the Council of State and Council of War had sat together all the Sabbath Day before and had then contrived this dissolution. Notwithstanding, I was resolved to go to Westminster to satisfy myself of the truth, and to take my share of what I should see or learn there.

Going by water to Westminster, I was told that the Parliament doors were locked up and guarded with soldiers, and the barges were to attend the Protector to the Painted Chamber. As I went, I saw two barges at the Privy Stairs. Being come to the Hall, I was confirmed in what I had heard. Nevertheless, I did purpose not to take things merely upon trust, but would receive an actual repulse to confirm my faith.

Accordingly, I attempted up the Parliament Stairs, but there was a guard of soldiers, who told me there was no passage that way; that the House was locked up and command given to give no admittance to any. That, if I were a Member, I might go into the Painted Chamber, where the Protector would presently be.

The mace was taken away by Commissary-General Whalley.<sup>1</sup> The Speaker<sup>2</sup> and all the Members were walking up and down the Hall, the Court of Requests, and the Painted Chamber, expecting the Protector's coming; the passages there being likewise guarded with soldiers.

The Protector coming about ten of the clock, attended with his officers, life-guard, and halberds, he took his place upon the scaffold, where it was before, and made a speech of about an hour-and-a-half long. Wherein he did not forbear to tell us that he did expect and hope for better fruit and effect of our last meeting in that place than he had yet found; that he perceived there was a necessity upon him to magnify, as he called it, his office. He told us a large series of the providences of God and the suffrages of the people, which were so many witnesses, evidences, and seals of his calling to the government, and which did cause him to put a greater value upon his title so derived than upon the broken hereditary title of any prince whatsoever. That having received his office from God and from the people, he was resolved never to part with it until God and the people should take it from him. That it could not be expected, when he told us before that we were a free Parliament that he meant it otherwise free than as it should act under the government. That those pitiful forwardnesses and peevishnesses which were abroad, he valued no more than the motes in the sun. But that the Parliament should now dispute his office, under whose authority we were then met, was a great astonishment to him. That he was unwilling to break privileges, but necessity had no law. He told us he had ordered the Parliament doors to be locked up and guarded, and had appointed an officer to take subscriptions to a recognition of his authority; which being done might give us an entrance. Which being said, we were dismissed about eleven o'clock.

His party, that is, courtiers and officers of the army and some others, presently subscribed. Before they adjourned, which was about twelve of the clock, there were about one hundred subscriptions; which being entered, they sent for the Speaker, who came, subscribed, entered, and adjourned until two of the clock.

In the meantime, the rest of the Members consulted one another's judgments. I went to see what it was that we were to subscribe unto. It was written in a long piece of parchment in these words, or to that effect, viz.:

I do hereby freely promise and engage that I will be true and faithful to the Lord Protector and the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and that according to the tenor of the indentures whereby I am returned to serve in this present Parliament, I will not propose or consent to alter the government as it is settled in a sole person and the Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Whalley (c. 1607–c. 1675)

<sup>2</sup> William Lenthall (1591–1662), Speaker of the House of Commons (1647–1653, 1654–1655, 1659–1660)

Our Norfolk Members did not presently subscribe, saving only Mr. Frere,<sup>1</sup> who instantly subscribed it. The rest of our Members did most of us dine together purposely to consult what was fitted to be done in so great an exigent, in order to the discharge of our trust. And, truly, the subscription was, in effect, no more than what we were restrained unto by our indentures, and the thing would be done without us, and we had fairly contended for it: we had not given the question, but it was forced from us, and we were told that plainly it must be so.

For these and several other considerations and reasons, which we thought ought to prevail with men preferring the peace of our countries and the safety of our people immediately concerned in this affair before passions and humours, we thought fit rather to give way to the present necessity and to comply with it by submitting than refusing. Accordingly we did subscribe, all except Mr. Wodehouse,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hobart,<sup>3</sup> and Mr. Church.<sup>4</sup> And although we condemn the breach of privilege as much as any, yet we doubt not but to acquit ourselves to God and to our country in so doing, rather than to put the nation into another combustion and confusion.

After we had subscribed, we went into the House and after some expressions of tenderness and respects to our fellow Members without, we adjourned until Thursday morning; the next day, Wednesday, being the Fast.

Guy Carleton Lee, ed. *Source Book of English History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1900):387–389.

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<sup>1</sup> Tobias Frere (–1656), Member of Parliament for Norfolk (1653–1656)

<sup>2</sup> Philip Wodehouse (1608–1681), Member of Parliament for Norfolk (1654–1655, 1656–1658)

<sup>3</sup> John Hobart (1628–1683), Member of Parliament for Norfolk (1654–1659)

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Church (–), Member of Parliament for Norwich (1654–1659)