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**The Earl of Clarendon, Hamon L'Estrange,
and the Riot at St. Giles on July 23, 1637:
A Study In Methodology**

Thomas R. Peck

Charles I, King of England and Scotland, pursued two policies during the 1630s: absolutism in government and uniformity in religion within the Church of England. Toward the latter goal, King Charles required the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, to devise a new *Book of Common Prayer* for use in all religious services in England and Scotland. On July 23, 1637, the new *Book of Common Prayer* was introduced into Scotland. The event caused a riot at St. Giles Church, Edinburgh, where the *Book* was first read. The disturbance spilled into the streets, and the rioting continued for three days. As a result, the Privy Council of Scotland suspended the use of the new *Book*. It was never used again in Scotland.

With the suspension of the new *Book of Common Prayer*, Charles I received the first substantial check to his religious policy. In an attempt to reverse this, Charles began a series of maneuvers which led to civil war in both Scotland and England, the abandonment of the policies of absolutism and religious uniformity, and ultimately to the execution of the King himself.¹

There are nine accounts of the riot at St. Giles.² This article attempts to determine which is the most accurate. Each of the nine accounts relates a different tale, and it is impossible to reconcile them all. Furthermore, none of the accounts is by an eyewitness. Since the riot was a significant event, it is

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important to identify the sources used by the authors of the various accounts to help establish their validity. To do this, I searched for clues within the accounts which might reveal their sources and correlated my findings with other documentary evidence. It was impossible to positively identify the sources used by the authors of most of the accounts. There was, however, a noticeable similarity between the accounts of the Earl of Clarendon and Hamon L'Estrange.³

Edward Hyde, First Earl of Clarendon, became the leader of the King's party in Parliament in 1641 and entered the King's Privy Council after the civil war began. Hyde was in exile from 1645 to 1660, during which time he was one of the King's advisors. Upon the King's restoration in 1660, Hyde was named Earl of Clarendon and made the King's principal minister, a capacity in which he served until 1667. His great histories, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* and *Life of Clarendon*, are the most valuable of all contemporary accounts of the English civil war and the Restoration. The former work contains Clarendon's account of the riot at St. Giles.

Hamon L'Estrange was a member of the gentry and a Royalist. He partook briefly in the military engagements of the civil war and then retired. L'Estrange completed *The Reign of King Charles* in 1655, which defended the King's position during the era, and it is this work which contains L'Estrange's account of the events at St. Giles.

Struck by the harmony of the accounts of Clarendon and L'Estrange, I placed their two accounts side by side. I then numbered each individual act and created separate columns for either author's account. If one of the authors failed to recount an act, the appropriate space in his column was left blank. (See the Appendix.) Out of the twenty-three separate acts identified, Clarendon and L'Estrange agreed on sixteen (seventy percent). In addition, the sequence of events was exactly the same in both accounts. Of the seven acts on which they did not agree, six (those which are labelled: 2, 13, 17, 18, 19, and 21) were events which L'Estrange simply did not record. Thus, concerning these six, L'Estrange did not contradict Clarendon. Only on act number 6 is there a true difference in the accounts. Here Clarendon has recorded that the crowd hurled stones, sticks, and cudgels at the dean's head, while L'Estrange did not recount this. This was not merely a matter of L'Estrange failing to record an event because, in act 9, L'Estrange gave the distinct impression that it was only when the Bishop of Edinburgh began to speak that the rioters threw things at *him*, and not at the dean. Despite this one contradiction, the accounts show a remarkable similarity.

Conversely, although L'Estrange and Clarendon agreed with each other in most cases, they only occasionally agreed with the authors of the other seven accounts. For example, some of the other accounts mentioned that the Bishop of Edinburgh spoke⁴ and others did not.⁵ Yet Clarendon and L'Estrange alone recorded the substance of his speech. Six of the other accounts noted that the crowd threw stools, with which Clarendon agreed;⁶ however, only L'Estrange and Clarendon claimed that cudgels were thrown.⁷ After the church had been cleared of the unruly multitude, Clarendon and L'Estrange stated that the doors were barred; only one other source recorded this event.⁸ Finally, only these two authors specifically recorded that the Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop of St. Andrews, commanded that the provost and magistrates, who were seated in the gallery, suppress the riot. And only Clarendon and L'Estrange included in their accounts that the rioters rapped upon the church doors and pelted the windows with stones.⁹

What explanation can be given for this remarkable similarity between the accounts of Clarendon and L'Estrange and their dissimilarity with the other accounts of the riot? There are three possible answers to this question: First, L'Estrange may have copied Clarendon. Second, Clarendon could have borrowed from L'Estrange. The third possibility is that both authors used an hitherto unknown account of the riot which was not used by the authors of the other seven accounts.

It does not seem likely that either L'Estrange or Clarendon could have used the other as his source. The Earl of Clarendon fled from England on March 4, 1646, and went first to the Scilly Islands and then to Jersey where he remained until June 27, 1648. During this period, he wrote the section of *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars* which includes his account of the riot at St. Giles.¹⁰ He remained on the continent for the rest of his exile and returned to England in 1660. Hamon L'Estrange fought briefly for the Royalist cause, withdrawing from the conflict in 1643. For the next eight years, he lived in partial retirement in England. Having reconciled himself to Parliamentary rule, he emerged from his semi-isolation in 1651. He lived at Ringstead until his death in 1660. In 1655 he published *The Reign of King Charles*, which he revised in 1656.¹¹

Thus, Clarendon wrote his account of the riot at St. Giles between March 1646 and June 1648. L'Estrange composed his rendition of the riot sometime before 1655. There is no evidence that L'Estrange and Clarendon communicated with one another between 1646 and 1660, when L'Estrange died. Further, they were separated by a great distance and, for part of the time, a good deal of civil strife. Finally, there is no evidence that L'Estrange was aware of Clarendon's work, which was only in manuscript form in the 1650s, when L'Estrange wrote *The Reign of King Charles*. Similarly, there is no indication that Clarendon revised his account as a result of the work of L'Estrange.

With little possibility that L'Estrange or Clarendon aided the other, one is forced to accept the third explanation for the similarity of the accounts. This is, in fact, the best possibility because L'Estrange and Clarendon indicated the type of source from which they derived their accounts. Introducing the section of his book which dealt with the occurrences in Scotland in 1637, Hamon L'Estrange wrote:

. . . a true account I shall give you, though not an exact one, as to descend to every particular; that is done already as by a Royal hand, so 'Stylo Imperatorio,' in a full body, and Historical systeme: from whence I shall extract such occurrences as are of prime remarque. . . .¹²

L'Estrange was clearly deriving his narrative of the events in Scotland in 1637 from some official documents. How he acquired them, and what they were he left unsaid.

The Earl of Clarendon cast more light onto his sources. At the conclusion of his narration of the riot, he noted:

. . . it seems the bishops thought it not of moment enough to desire or require any help or protection from the council; but without conferring with them, or applying themselves to them, they dispatched away an express to the king, with a full and particular information of all that had passed
¹³

Clarendon while resident on Jersey, requested and received many

documents from the royal government.¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume, in light of the above statement, that the report of the bishops was among them.

Additional information on the source or sources for the accounts of Clarendon and L'Estrange is derived from a letter written by Robert Baillie, Principal of the University of Glasgow. Baillie arrived in Edinburgh the day after the riot at St. Giles (i.e., on July 24), and he stayed for several days, speaking with many people about the events. On October 4, 1637, he wrote to William Spang concerning the riot. Concluding his account of the riot in the letter to Spang, Baillie identified two, separate, official accounts of the riot sent to King Charles I:

The Chancellor [Archbishop of St. Andrews] wrote up presently the story to the King, with some wype to the Thesaurer, who that foule day was from the towne. The Thesaurer and Counsellors being highly offended, that the Chancellors should wryte in such a business without their privity, delayed to write or send their post till the Fryday. It was thought the Councill's letter did extenuate the matter so much, as it might be laid on the rascall multitude, with some reflexion on the Bishop's imprudent precipitation.¹⁵

Are either of these accounts, one by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, the Chancellor, the other by the Privy Council, the accounts referred to by L'Estrange or Clarendon? The Archbishop's account, referred to by Baillie, and the bishops' account, referred to by Clarendon, appear to be the same report. First, both Baillie and Clarendon claim the accounts to be the work of the Scottish clerical hierarchy, either the Archbishop (Baillie) or simply the bishops (Clarendon). Second, both Baillie and Clarendon stated that the report was written without the consultation of the Privy Council. Third, Baillie stated that the report of the Archbishop contained "some wype to the Thesaurer." In this context, "wype" means a harsh or sarcastic remark. The Earl of Clarendon wrote a page-long defense of the Earl of Traquaire, the Treasurer, for his actions with regard to the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* into Scotland.¹⁶ Clarendon placed that statement immediately prior to his account of the riot at St. Giles. It is probable that Clarendon was moved to write the defense of Traquaire at that point in his *History* precisely because he had read the Archbishop's report.

Therefore, the Archbishop's account is one source for Clarendon's *History*. But did L'Estrange also use this report? It seems unlikely that he did, both because of what L'Estrange included in his account and because he failed to note so many of the details that Clarendon recorded. It appears that L'Estrange had access solely to the account of the Privy Council and, moreover, that Clarendon had knowledge of the Privy Council's report in addition to the Archbishop's report. To support these suppositions, note that Baillie's description of the Privy Council's report contained two elements, the first being that the blame for the riot was put on the mob and the second that the Bishop of Edinburgh had acted imprudently. Both these elements are contained within the accounts of L'Estrange and Clarendon. One should particularly note Baillie's reference to the Bishop. Only Clarendon and L'Estrange contained a summation of the Bishop's speech. It seems most likely that they obtained it from the Privy Council's report.

If Clarendon had used both accounts, while L'Estrange had access to only the Privy Council's, this may explain some of the discrepancies between their two similar, though not identical,

accounts. L'Estrange may simply have not had as many facts available to him. This shortage of material would then translate as blanks in his column in the Appendix to this paper.

In sum, the similarity of the accounts of the Earl of Clarendon and Hamon L'Estrange and their differences from the other authors' leads one to suspect that Clarendon and L'Estrange have used the same source or sources, which were not available to the other writers. A study of their personal histories during the time when they were composing their accounts of the riot apparently rules out the possibility of their having copied one another. Hamon L'Estrange noted his access to official documents describing the events in Scotland in 1637. The Earl of Clarendon was aware of an account of the riot written by the bishops and had access to royal documents. Robert Baillie's account of two official reports describing the riot supports the assumption that Clarendon had read the Archbishop's report. Further, Baillie's description of the Privy Council's report leads one to believe that L'Estrange and Clarendon read and used this report. Therefore, since the Chancellor and most of the Privy Council were present in St. Giles on July 23, 1637,¹⁷ the accounts of Clarendon and L'Estrange are drawn from eye-witness reports. Clarendon, however, seems to have used both the bishop's and the Privy Council's reports while L'Estrange apparently only had access to the latter.

I undertook the research for this note because the nine accounts of the riot at St. Giles disagreed so markedly. This is not an uncommon problem for historians. When faced with this situation, the historian must choose to believe some sources and disbelieve others. The historian does so because he must decide *what* happened before he is able to decide *why* it happened. Comparative studies of sources, such as presented here, can help the historian in establishing the important factual foundation to historical analysis.

NOTES

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1. C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's Peace 1637-1641* (London: Collins, 1955), pp. 13, 63-64, 76, 91.

2. The nine accounts are: Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ed. by David Laing (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club Publications, 1841-1842), pp. i, 15-18; Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. by W. Dunn Macray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), pp. i, 143-146; Henry Guthrie, "Memoirs," printed in *Scottish Diaries and Memoirs 1550-1746*, ed. by J.G. Fyfe (Stirling, Scotland: E. MacKay, 1928-1942), pp. 136-138; Samuel Johnson, *Notes upon the Phoenix Edition of the Pastoral Letter* (London: n.p., 1694), part 1, pp. 103-104; Archibald Johnston, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston* (Edinburgh: At the University Press, 1896), p. 265; Hamon L'Estrange, *The Reign of King Charles* (London: n.p., 1655), pp. 146-147; Earl of Rothes, "Relation," printed in *The Scottish Covenanters*, ed. by J. Pringle Thomson (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), pp. 1-3; John Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland and in England* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Co., 1850), pp. i, 79-80; Robert Wodrow, *Analecta* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1842-1843), pp. i, 64. It is true that the account in Sir Richard Baker's *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (London: n.p., 1733), p. 449, is markedly similar to those of Clarendon and L'Estrange. This section of Baker's book, however, was written by Edward Philips, who was frequently accused of plagiarism by his contemporaries. Since Hamon L'Estrange's account of the riot was available to Philips when he wrote in 1660, L'Estrange having published his book in 1655 and again in 1656, one can assume that Philips copied this rendering of the events of July 23, 1637 at St. Giles. Therefore, I have not counted Baker as one of the accounts. See Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Clarendon Press, 1921-1922), pp. xv, 1084.

3. Notable among the current works on the subject are: John Bowle, *Charles I* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975), pp. 160-162; William M. Campbell, *The Triumph of Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1958), pp. 29-31; Gordon Donaldson, *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637* (Edinburgh: At the University Press, 1954), pp. 82-83; Walter Makey, *The Church of the Covenant 1637-1651* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1979), pp. 18-19; David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-1644* (Newton Abbot, Eng.: David and Charles, 1973), pp. 60-64.

4. Johnston, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston*, p. 265; Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland*, pp. i, 79.

5. Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, pp. i, 18; Guthrie, "Memoirs," p. 137; Rothes, "Relation," pp. 1-3.

6. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 144; Guthrie, "Memoirs," p. 137; Johnston, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston*, p. 265; Rothes, "Relation," p. 1; Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland*, pp. i, 79; Wodrow, *Analecta*, pp. i, 64.

7. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 144; L'Estrange, *Reign of King Charles*, p. 147.

8. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 144; L'Estrange, *Reign of King Charles*, p. 147; Rothes, "Relation," p. 1.

9. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 144-145; L'Estrange, *Reign of King Charles*, pp. 146-147.

10. T.H. Lister, *Life and Administration of Edward, First Earl of Clarendon* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1837-1838), pp. i, 295-305.

11. Stephen and Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography*, pp. xi, 994-995.

12. L'Estrange, *Reign of King Charles*, p. 146.

13. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 145.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. v, 476; Clarendon, *Life of Clarendon and Continuation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1827), pp. i, 239; P. Ogle and W.H. Bliss, eds., *Calendar of Clarendon State Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), pp. i, 326, 341-342, 353, 356, 357, 367, 394, 402-403, 419.

15. Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, pp. i, 18.

16. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars*, pp. i, 143-144.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

APPENDIX

The following accounts of the riot are drawn from Hamon L'Estrange's *The Reign of King Charles* (London: n.p., 1655), 147; and the Earl of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), pp. i, 144-145. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained.

<u>L'Estrange</u>	<u>Clarendon</u>
1 July 23, being Sunday	1 On Sunday morning appointed for the work,
2	2 The Chancellor of Scotland and others of the Council being present in the cathedral church,
3 The Dean of Edenburgh began to read the Book in St. Giles Church (the chief of that city)	3 The dean began to read the Liturgy,
4 but he no sooner began,	4 which he had no sooner entered upon
5 then the inferior multitude began in a tumultuous manner to fill the Church with uproar;	5 but a noise and clamour was raised throughout the church that no voice could be heard distinctly,
6	6 and then a shower of stones and sticks and cudgels were thrown at the dean's head,
7 whereupon the Bishop of Edenburgh, stept into the pulpit,	7 The Bishop went up into the pulpit,
8 and hoping to appease them by minding them of the sanctity of the place,	8 and from thence put them in mind of the sacredness of the place, of their duty to God
9 they were the more enraged, throwing at him cudgels,	9 but he found no more reverence, nor was the

L'Estrange

stools, and what was in the
 way of fury, unto the very
 endangering of his life;
 10 upon this the Archbishop of
 St. Andrews, Lord Chancellor,
 was enforced to call down from
 the Gallery the Provost, Bayliffs,
 and other magistrates of the City
 (then sitting there) to their
 assistance,
 11 who with much ado at length
 thrust that unruly rabble out of
 the Church, and made fast the
 doores;
 12 This done, the Dean proceeded
 in reading the Book,
 13
 14 the multitude in the mean
 while rapping at the doores,
 pelting the windowes with
 stones,
 15 and endeavoring what in them
 lay to disturb that sacred
 exercise;
 16 but not withstanding all their
 clamour, the service was ended.
 17
 18 but not the peoples rage,
 19
 20 who waiting the Bishops
 retiring to his lodging,
 so assaulted him,
 21
 22 as had he not been rescued
 by a strong hand, he had
 probably persht by their
 violence.
 23 Nor was St. Giles Church
 only thus pester'd, and
 profan'd, but in other
 Churches also, (though not
 in so high a measure) the
 peoples disorders were
 unison and agreeable.

Clarendon

clamour or disorder less
 than before.
 10 The Chancellor, from his
 seat, commanded the provost
 and magistrate of the city
 to descent from the gallery
 in which they sat and by
 their authority to suppress
 the riot,
 11 which at last with great
 difficulty they did, by
 driving out the rudest of
 those who made the disturb-
 ance out of the church and
 shutting the doores,
 12 which gave the dean occasion
 to proceed in the reading
 of the Liturgy,
 13 which was not at all intended
 or hearkened to by those
 who remained within the
 church;
 14 and it had, they who were
 turned out continued their
 barbarous noise, brake the
 windows, and endeavored to
 break down the doores;
 15 so that it was not possible
 for any to follow their
 devotion.
 16 When all was done that at
 that time could be done
 there,
 17 and the Council and magis-
 trates went out of the church
 to their houses,
 18 the rabble followed the
 bishops with all the
 opprobrious language they
 could invent, or bringing
 in superstition and Popery
 into the kingdom, and making
 the people slaves,
 19 and were not content to use
 their tongues, but employed
 their hands too in throwing
 dirt and stones at them.
 20 and treated the bishop of
 Edinburgh, (whom they looked
 upon as most active that
 way), so rudely
 21 that with great difficulty
 he got into a house after
 they had torn his habit,
 22 and was from thence removed
 to his own with great
 hazard of his life.
 23 As this was the reception
 it had in the cathedral,
 so it fared not better in
 the other churches in the
 city, but was entertained
 with the same hollowing and
 outcries, and threatening
 the men whose office it was
 to read it, with the same
 bitter execrations against
 bishops and Popery.