

SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT

John Pym (1583–1643), Member of Parliament for Tavistock (1625–1643)

7 November 1640

The distempers of this Kingdom are well known; they need not repetition. For though we have good laws, yet they want their execution; or if they are executed, it is in a wrong sense. I shall endeavor to apply a remedy to the breaches that are made, and to that end, I shall discover first the quality of the disease. An actual declaration of offences needs no statute, and that is a step to reformation.

There is a design to alter the kingdom both in religion and government. This is the highest of treasons! This blows up by piecemeal, and almost goes through their ends! This concerns the King as well as us, and that I say with reverence and care of His Majesty.

First, the Papist party's attempt to alter our religion, being obliged by a maxim in their doctrine not only to maintain their own religion, but to extirpate all others. Their mode is by setting a difference between the King and his subjects.

The second is the corrupt part of our clergy that make things for their own ends, and wish an union between us and Rome. The hierarchy cannot amount to the height they aim at without a breach of our law. To which their religion necessarily joins, that if the one stands, the other must necessarily fall.

Thirdly, agents and pensioners to Spain and other foreign states, who see we cannot comply to them if we maintain our religion established, which is contrary to theirs. Here they intend chiefly the Spanish white and gold works, which are of most effect.

Fourthly, favourites—such as are for their own preferments, prize not conscience, and further all bad things—are worse than Papists. These are willing to run into Popery. Such are our judges, spiritual and temporal; such are also some of our councillors of state. All these, though severed, yet in their contrivements they aim at one end. They have proceeded in their motion first softly, now with strides, and if they be not prevented, they are near their ends, to which their designs walk on five feet. The first foot is: First, ecclesiastical courts. Secondly, discountenancing preachers that are forward in our religion and persecuting virtuous men under the law of purity. Thirdly, countenancing persons of contrary dispositions. They must be of their own party, or else no promotion. Fourthly, by negotiating agents from hence to Rome, and from Rome to this place, to extirpate our religion. Proof will appear. Fifthly, frequent preaching up the absolute monarchy of kings; as Dr. Beale¹ and others.

The second foot—policy for the state and courts of justice: First, the council endeavouring to make differences between the King and people by the political interpretation of the law to serve their turns, and thus to impose taxes against law with a colour of law. The judges were chidden. A judge said, when a *habeas corpus* was applied for, "We granted a *habeas corpus* in the King's Bench, and we were well chidden for our labour." Secondly, by keeping the King in constant necessity, that he may seek to their counsels for relief. To this purpose to keep the Parliaments in distaste, that their counsels may be taken. The King by them is brought to this, as a woman that used herself to poison could not live with good meat. Search the chronicles and we see no king that ever used Parliaments was brought to this want. No imputation is to be laid upon the King for any irregular actions, but upon them that be entrusted. Thirdly, arbitrary proceedings in courts of justice. Law and precedents are nothing. We have all law left to the conscience of a single man. All courts are now courts of conscience without conscience. All defence of the subject is now taken away in order to the dissolution of the Kingdom. Fourthly, plotters to enforce a war between Scotland and us, that when we had well wearied one

¹ In 1635 William Beale (–1651), Master of Saint John's College (Cambridge), preached that "taxes and subsidies, tonnage and poundage ... are the King's absolutely, as absolutely as his Crown and likewise ourselves, our goods, our servants, our children"

another, we might be brought to what scorn they pleased. A sermon was preached in the north before the King to make an agreement between Popery and our religion. The partition wall must be broken down, which was the Puritans. The Scots have been the first authors of all. Fifthly, by misguiding the King's approbation.

The third foot: First, the discontent and sudden dissolving of Parliaments and punishing of Parliament men, all to affright us from speaking what we think. I will not mention the breach of privileges of old, but state instances in new; as Mr. Crewe's case,¹ who was committed for not delivering up the petitions of the House. The clerk is bound not to deliver up any petitions, nor so any Member. If there be no safety here, then nowhere! Secondly, a declaration which slandered our proceedings, as full of lies as leaves, for which I desire reparation. The King took it upon the credit of others; he never saw it. Thirdly, ingratiating of Papists and saying they are the best subjects for they contribute money to the war, which the Protestants will not do, so to bring the King in love with them. Fourthly, by moulding the Irish government into an illegal course, with intent to do so here. We ought to have interest with them. We are all the same subjects, and this is no new thing.

The fourth foot takes military steps. First, by putting places of importance into the hands of Papists or suspected persons; as who were commanders in the last war. Secondly, power given to Papists to muster by commission. Thirdly, none more strong in arms than they, to whom their armour is delivered, contrary to the statute. Fifthly, their endeavour is to bring in strange soldiers from beyond the sea to be billeted upon us. Endeavours have been and haply are, but that means are wanted to do it. We have had no account of the Spanish navy coming here, which has caused great jealousies. Sixthly, now our fear is from Ireland. The Irish army is to bring us to a better order. We are not fully conquered.

Lastly, the fifth foot: Papistical books that proceed from many active men who live here in London, and are agents; by whose desires, also, many monasteries, nunneries, and colleges have been erected here in London, for this foot has gone far. I move that there may be a settled committee to find out the danger the King and Kingdom are in.

John Langton Sanford, *Studies and Illustrations of the Great Rebellion* (London: John W. Parker, 1858):301–303.

¹ John Crewe (1598–1679), Member of Parliament for Amersham (1624–1626), Brackley (1626–1628, 1640), Banbury (1628–1629), and Northamptonshire (1640–1648). In 1640, Charles I committed Crewe to the Tower for refusing to surrender petitions sent him from his constituents.