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## THE ANGLICAN CHURCH, POPULAR PROTEST AND CORRUPTION<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This article examines the role of the term “corruption” as used in the propaganda prints on the eve of the English Civil Wars in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The term has many meanings, and today we probably think first of corruption as bribery, lobbying and illegal payments to achieve certain aims. This meaning does appear in the discussed publications, but corruption as decay and destruction is more popular by far. Many contemporary leaflets utilise it to describe the position of the Anglican Church in the first half of the ‘century of revolution’.

**Key Words:** Anglican Church, popular culture, propaganda, corruption, 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Kościół anglikański, kultura masowa, propaganda, korupcja, wiek XVII.

Most historians will agree that corruption is as old as humanity and can be detected in any historical period and place. It accompanies human activity throughout ages. This paper will analyse some aspects of corruption, or indeed point to its presence or lack thereof in mid-seventeenth century England. Yet before venturing to the doorsteps of the early Stuarts, the term “corruption” needs to be precisely defined.

The first and possibly most important feature of corruption is that it is objective and it does not depend on a perception biased by many objective and subjective factors, but on a precise and clear definition. Once defined, corruption stands for its meaning, regardless of whether it is applied to any moral judgments, whether the definition is accepted, condemned, or ignored. By defining the act of giving a state official any gift at any time as corruption, it will remain

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr Elizabeth Bryant for her hard work on what I thought was English, but was not, and for correcting my many errors. I am responsible for any that remain.

corruption, even if such behaviour is accepted, tolerated or even desired in a certain social groups. Corruption remains corruption, but is not necessarily viewed as negative in certain societies throughout history.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines corruption as:<sup>2</sup>

1. 'a destruction, or decomposition of something in a way which makes it void of the constitution which makes it what it is' in the physical meaning of the word means;
2. 'a moral deterioration or decay; depravity' in the moral meaning of the word it is;
3. 'a perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties by bribery or favour' also in the moral meaning of the word;
4. finally it stands for 'the perversion of anything from an original state of purity', and this definition stands for virginity, language, but also for institutions and customs.

This article will look for evidence of corruption enacted through bribery, as well as corruption as a phenomenon of decay, destruction and perversion of certain entities from their original state of purity, or a state that is conceived by the contemporaries as state of purity. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the first known cases of the use of the term corruption as defined above (in English printed works) was for the years 1425 and 1656.<sup>3</sup> However, this paper will show an even earlier reference.

The mid-seventeenth century saw the breakdown of governance in Britain, in particular in England. One of the main causes for opposition to the monarch of England was religious.<sup>4</sup> In addition to problems with the personal rule of Charles I, taxation and the lack of recognition of the Parliament and its rights, the two early Stuart kings, James I and Charles I, conducted their religious policy in a manner which possibly indicated that they were seeking to re-establish the Catholic Church. One of the most important men in England besides Charles I was William Laud, the archbishop of Canterbury. It was very much his actions which indicated a turn against the English institutional church and were read by contemporaries as corruption of that institution by its dogmatic leader. This was the interpretation of Laud's attempts to change communion tables into altars, introduce Catholic-esque ceremonies and priestly clothing, as well as the archbishop's belief in transubstantiation. Interestingly, the church during the first half of the seventeenth century was not seen as fully reformed, and one could

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<sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, version 4.0 on CD, Oxford; Oxford University Press 2009, entry: *corruption*. The Oxford English Dictionary provides ten meanings of the term corruption. Four of them are the most applicable to this article and have been listed.

<sup>3</sup> c. 1425 Andrew Wyntoun, but also William Shakespeare in 1494; 1656 James Harrington in his *Oceana*.

<sup>4</sup> C. Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 58–130.

easily use the term 'corrupt' to the old, rotten structures of the English church seen as an institution.<sup>5</sup>

Laud's attempt to implement the English Prayer Book in Scotland led to a rebellion in the north, the first Bishops' War, and eventually to civil war and revolution in England. After eleven years of rule without a Parliament, Charles I had to summon it to cope with the crisis. The so-called Short Parliament and later the Long Parliament led to a confrontation between the monarch and his subjects. The king, his ministers and collaborators found themselves under strong pressure from the gathered deputies. Many English bishops, including Laud, were imprisoned and executed. The Parliament engaged in a direct struggle against the monarch, which ended in the execution of Charles I in 1649. Revolution also came in the sphere of the popular press,<sup>6</sup> which was more than ever ready to attack the established government and church.<sup>7</sup> With all church control gone and the monarch in deep retreat and outside London, authors and publishers were free to print whatever they saw needed and helpful for the backing of the Parliament.

Where, if anywhere, can we find corruption in these events? An average student of early modern British history can point to a number of events and processes which could well be labelled as corruption: corruption of government, corruption of monarchs' contacts with the Parliament, as well as corruption of religion and the English church. Yet, if one looks for the discussed term in the contemporary history of the early modern political conflict in England,<sup>8</sup> in the history of the religious discord and conflict<sup>9</sup> and finally in the debate on the causes of the English Civil War,<sup>10</sup> historians generally do not use this term to describe the events and processes of those years. Corruption is not used to explain the political discourse carried out on the pages of contemporary pamphlets.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 448–528.

<sup>6</sup> J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 161–201.

<sup>7</sup> D. Cressy, *England on Edge*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 281–309.

<sup>8</sup> J.P. Sommerville, *Politics & Ideology in England*, London–New York: Longman, 1986, passim; R. Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts*, London–New York: Longman, 1989, passim; D. Cressy, op. cit., passim.

<sup>9</sup> J.L. Black, *The Martin Marprelate Tracts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, passim; A. Milton, op.cit., passim; P.I. Kaufman, *Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, passim; J.N. King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, passim.

<sup>10</sup> C. Russell, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> D. Cressy, op. cit., pp. 281–309; J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, Hants: Ashgate, 2004, passim; A. Hughes, *Gangraena*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, passim; J. Raymond, op. cit., passim.

There is no doubt that the events of mid-seventeenth century did bear the stigma of corruption. Since contemporary historians distance themselves from this terminology, the original seventeenth century works and terms used by the seventeenth century authors should be examined.

To many seventeenth century inhabitants of the kingdom, the English reformation remained unfinished – it was initiated by Henry VIII and continued by his children (Edward VI and Elizabeth I), but never turned the English church into a Lutheran or a Calvinist one. Many Englishmen found the church to be neither Catholic, nor Protestant. Although in most historical works of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, there is no explicit reference to corruption in the body of the church,<sup>12</sup> it was conceived as corrupt and decayed by the contemporaries. This is how the episcopate, a relic of the Catholic times, as well as some ceremonies and priests' clothing were perceived. Let us refer to the contemporary opinions.

Corruption in the church can be traced on at least three levels. The first refers to the corruption of the church as an institution. The existence of priests as well as the episcopate was often understood as an element of unnecessary bureaucracy, not needed for salvation. They were perceived as bodies and officials open to corruption, human institutions standing between the faithful lay and God himself.

The second platform of corruption was constituted by bishops, and in particular the archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Laud is seen as the source of corruption and wrongdoings in the church on a far greater scale than the episcopate and church institutions. This was due to his religious undertakings connected with the church of England, as well as with Arminianism and his position in England, as he was perceived as second only to Charles I in both church and political matters.

Finally, there was common business corruption in the church, church courts and institutions. The church as an institution was responsible for various legal courts, for keeping registers and many bureaucratic functions of those times. More than often these would not be rendered to common people without a proper bribe.

### **Corruption of religion**

The religious situation in England during mid-seventeenth century was complex and bound to explode sooner or later. The Church of England, codified by the Elizabethan settlement a century earlier, took root among the population. Yet the policy of the monarch and of the episcopate connected with the church, as well as the rise and growth of the counterreformation in continental Europe, did

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<sup>12</sup> A. Milton, *op. cit.*, *passim*; P.I. Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, *passim*; J.N. King, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

not allow people to remain peaceful and unworried about the future. Many found the reform in England to be unfinished and wished for a new push towards Calvinism. The Puritans, on the one hand, and the authors of the Marprelate tracts on the other sought ways to promote further reformation and change. At the same time, the vision of a Catholic crusade against England did not vanish entirely. Since the Queen<sup>13</sup> was Catholic, such inclinations could be witnessed through the monarch, and William Laud and his followers inside the English church became fascinated with Arminianism, which for many was identified with Catholicism. It is no wonder that various explanations and reasoning were brought forth to describe the situation of the English Church as critical and destroyed by the corruption of the church – both as believers and as an institution.

Corruption is applied as an explanation not only of the collapse of the state, but also for religion and the church. Possibly this was even considered more dangerous than the corruption of state organs, as many saw religious change, or lack thereof, as the reason for unrest and disorder in the whole kingdom. Many perceived the unfinished reformation, as well as the supposed plotting of the papists supported by the pope, as the very root of the conflict during the mid seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> Corruption was also seen in the existence of all groups, sects and heresies which emerged in large numbers without any control of the religious life in the aftermath of arrest and execution of bishops as well as the collapse of the royal government in 1641.

In a 1641 brochure describing the 29 sects existing in London, the author leaves no doubt as to how should they be seen and perceived, when he writes: “these corrupt Sects”<sup>15</sup> in reference to all religious groups listed as functioning in England with the exception of the Protestants. He does not go into details in his very general overview of the supposed sects, but their wrongdoing, heresy and blasphemy is defined in one term: corrupt. Interestingly enough, for the author, the corrupted religions included Catholics, Lutherans, Muslims, among others. The term corruption sums up all the sins for every defined group.

The same argument and phraseology is often applied just to Catholicism. In a 1640 brochure announcing “England’s joy” at the banishment of the papists, we read about “Romes corrupted Doctrine”.<sup>16</sup> This text leaves no doubt as to why the author believes the Catholic religion is corrupt with its references to Catholic theology and teaching. Henry VIII may have had doubts when he broke

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<sup>13</sup> Henrietta Maria, the French wife of Charles I.

<sup>14</sup> J. Basista, *Propaganda religijna w przededniu i pierwszych latach angielskiej wojny domowej*, Kraków: Historia Iagiellonica, 2007, pp. 93–110.

<sup>15</sup> *A Discovery of 29 Sects here in London*, 1641, p. 2; seventeenth century prints, in particular pamphlets, broadsheets, ballads and alike often have no name of the Author, nor do they give the place and time of printing. Even if the names of authors are known to us today, I am quoting contemporary works as they appear in print – without an author, if not specified, as well as without the place and date of print.

<sup>16</sup> *Englands Ioy for the King’s Gracious Proclamation for the banishing Papists*, 1640, p. 11.

relations with Rome in 1634 and did not decide to fully introduce the reformed Calvinist rite in England, the seventeenth century authors did not. The author argued that the doctrinal teachings of Rome and its missionaries were corrupt, and England should get rid of their disciples and prophets.

A large number of additional brochures could be quoted here, which confirm the conviction of contemporary authors that the Catholic Church, Papacy, and all individuals connected with Rome were corrupt. In these publications there is a plethora of articles, essays rich in arguments and examples, proving the corrupt nature of the Catholic doctrine with exception being taken to the prayer book, the mass, the sacraments, the question of images, kneeling in the church and the idea of the cult of Mary.

### **Corruption in the English church**

Corruption in the Church of England itself had a much more specific face – it did not only mean the religious sphere, but the disablement of order and functioning of the church hierarchy, which, according to the Puritans and the Marprelate Tracts of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, was in deep crisis due to the lack of reformation. The Church was often seen as an unnecessary institution and its priests, deacons and bishops were perceived as corrupt and needless obstacles between the lay Christians and God. In a London print from the first months of the crisis we read the following quote from a speech by William Thomas: “I have formerly spoken of the present Church government, by Archbishops, Bishops, &c. Declaring the corruption and unsoundnesse thereof, and how farre degenerate, if not contrary to the pure Primitive, Apostolicall institution.”<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates a typical conviction of contemporary politicians and activists. Church offices and institutions were not only unneeded, but also harmful and contrary to Christ’s real church. The hierarchy of the English church, according to some authors, did not seem to be better than the despised and feared Church of Rome. In fact, the corrupt nature of the Church of England was to be found in the very essence of its structure and lack of its reform dating back to the times of Henry VIII. It was believed that the existence and functioning of the episcopate and priests led to corruption. They not only erred in what they were doing, but led their flock towards destruction. In a pamphlet uncovering the collapse of the leaders of the English clergy, an anonymous author, much like his fellow writers, leaves no doubt as to the corruption of these officials: “Like treacherous swaines, they drive their flocke to streames that are corrupted.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *A speech of William Thomas, Esquire in Parliament in May 1641, 1641, p. 1.*

<sup>18</sup> *The Bishops downefall, or the Prelates Snare, 1640, p. 4.*

This should not be surprising, as corruption, according to the English on the eve of 17<sup>th</sup> century, was initiated in Rome and, as one of the authors maintains, “there is no place in the World which they will not endeavor to corrupt with their wicked doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> ‘They’ in this passage stood for Roman Catholics and their real and supposed agents in England.

Often, the blame was put on the structure of the church as an institution. On the one hand, the institutional church was not necessary as a middle man between God and the faithful (or God and King). On the other, the institutional church prevented its lay members from taking active part in its works. Needless to say the episcopate and individual bishops were responsible for this. The contemporary works bring a significant number of accusations against the bishops; in particular against their leader William Laud. For instance, one author argued:

And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poore, free and bond, to receive a marke] That is, let them be who they will that come before him, it is all one; they must be sure to be pushed with his hornes, spoken of Vers. 11, except they have his marke, and that mark was made two wayes.

1. In their right hands] That is by bribes; not by covenanting and making promises to him, but by bringing their bribes with them in their hands. This downright way of bribing was one; the other make was

2. In their foreheads] This was very notable in the Archbishop, that when any man ever came to him to be judged in any case, if he frowned upon him, and bended his brows, that was a mark of his favour; but if he smiled on him, then the Archbishop was sure to give judgement against him: so the second marke was the bending of brows, it was put for them up on his forehead.<sup>20</sup>

In this work, devoted solely to Laud, the author distinguishes between the two significant dimensions of archbishop’s favours upon the people of England. On a smaller scale, he speaks of day-to-day corruption which is manifested through simple and somewhat primitive bribery, which is considered obvious corruption. The second mark he talks about is much more sophisticated, and yet much more important but also underlined with corruption. It is the archbishop, who ‘marks’ the subjects with his favour or lack thereof. No objectivity whatsoever, no judgment as such – solely the bishop’s will and humour. We find further confirmation of the corrupt nature of William Laud’s primacy from the following author who states:

Tis a pitteous thing worthy of consideration, to see what injustice is done in that Court by his owne knowledge and what extortion and exaction is used by his officers, there is not a more corrupt Court in the world, wherein innocency is punnished and publique sinnes counternanced, the greatest extortions of that court cannot be exprest, some are a whole year before they can be heard, and at last for a afetherly benediction are remitted to Sir John Lambe and Doctor Duck: I will instance two parties; first, the Lady Willoughby spent in suite in lesse then two yeares (as she related to

<sup>19</sup> *The Popes Brief*, London 1641, no pagination.

<sup>20</sup> *A Prophecie of the Life, Reigne and Death of William Laud*, 1644, pp. 3–4.

me) 500 pound and above, and all rendered, that her husband should weare a white sheete at the Church doore (when God knowes) her selfe deserved no lesse, for Doktor Reeves ashured me she was declared innocent by bribery.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, a well-balanced argument was able to buy the necessary pardon and mercy of the bishop's court. The author does not limit himself to one example and we can read about at least two more cases of justice being proclaimed on the base of financial arguments:

The other was Mast. Stapleton, Nephew to the Earle of Kongston, who claimed a certaine Lady to bee his wife having married her before two witnesses, and used the formall words of Matrimony, and seene by the same witnesses in naked bed, yet by force on mony he was divorced from her, having spent in the suite in charges only 300 pound.

In like sort Francis Conne, Brother to Seignior George Conne now Cupbearer in extraordinary to her Majesty, was convented at the high Commission for having married one Mistris Steward his Country woman in Scotland, and had married another one Mistris Wiseman in England /.../ after two yeares suite he was declared to bee Wisemans husband, mony was the cause, for himself assured me, it cost him in gifts, feasting his Advocates, and Clerks, above a 150 pound: What intollerable injustice was this, it being notoriously knowne that the Scottish woman was his wife?<sup>22</sup>

Again, this is not an isolated text and the tone repeats itself through many other brochures published during the era. Laud, the bishops, the episcopate, along with the prelates, deacons and other priests were seen as corrupt – either through simple bribery and rendering services upon special payments (favours), or seen as a decaying, corrupt church organisation, contrary to the expectations and needs of the people of England. From such a perspective we can qualify the whole Puritan movement as a practical outcry and protest against the collapse of the Anglican religion.<sup>23</sup>

### Collapse of the state

There is no doubt that we could freely and justly apply corruption in today's understanding of the word to the collapse of the administration of Charles I, the

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<sup>21</sup> *A Discovery of the Notorious Proceedings of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, /.../ With his tyrannical government both in himself and his Agents. Confessed by John Browne a Prisoner in the Gatehouse, twice examined by a Committee of six from the Honourable House of Commons*, London 1641, pp. A<sub>2r</sub>–A<sub>3v</sub>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. A<sub>3r</sub>–A<sub>4v</sub>.

<sup>23</sup> P. Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988, *passim*; *idem*, *Defining Puritanism – Again?*, [in:] *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. F.J. Bremer, Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993, pp. 3–9; *idem*, *Moderate Puritans and The Elizabethan Church*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, *passim*.

impeachment of Strafford, the arrests of bishops and the protests in Parliament. The Root and Branch Petition, the Great Remonstrance and other acts of the Long Parliament do not utilise this term, yet address the very phenomena which were clear signs of the decay and lack of functioning of the state. Contemporary authors saw these problems and addressed them in many popular leaflets and pamphlets, and utilise the term corruption, though in a limited meaning. For instance, an anonymous author writes:

“O England! How hast thou been tost and tumbled ? What have thy sufferings since this ware began? Atlas bears the world in his shoulders, and alas, sinne hath laid sorrow on thy back, thou has been, O England a long time nothing but a needly (?) of confusion, of murder, plunder and Malignant wickednesse, and hast like a Porter, groaned under the burden of knavery, ease now thy tyred shoulders and poure out some of them to the view of the World. Before the beginning of this Parliament, thou were divers wayes opprest, and many were thy greevances which thou didst suffer under great men; and how did the Star-Chamber domineere over the wrong'd Subject?<sup>24</sup>

The quoted passage is very powerful and moving indeed. It is a cry and an accusation against the wrongdoings and the miserable condition of England at the eve of the civil war. Reading the next paragraphs of the brochure, we come to the explicit explanation of the causes of the state of England:

What **corruption and bribery** was there in the Law? What buying and selling of Justice? This Lord, and that Lord must be solicited and sued unto even as far as Coventry, or the Devill of Dunsmore HEATH (now with the King) that it would please their Lordships to take a Bribe to doe a poor man Justice.

There was nothing by Playing, Dancing and Masking; the Commonwealth was a tree of Pleasure, and whoring was on the top branch, when the Queen mother was there, and it is thought, the Bishops case and good fate made them lusty, even to beger Bastards [...] (*The Devills White Boys*, 1644, p. 2)

The meaning of these words is obvious, yet it is worth stressing the language and context in which they are used. The author does not hesitate and does not have any restraints from accusing the clergy and the court of corruption, which has led to the destruction and decay of England's governance.

If the text was not explicit enough for potential readers, we can read the same author's direct accusation of bribery and corruption in a passage where he accuses the church/state institutions of being a sellable whore and an advocate of the devil:

Imprimie hundred pound baggs of money, and these were for the Bribes for my Lords the Judges; and for Symony to procure a Benefice for Master Dunscombe, a Levite of littell learning, and lesse

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<sup>24</sup> *The Devill's White Boys, or a mixture of malicious Malignants, with their much evill and manifold practices against the Kingdome and the Parliament*, London 1644, p. 2.

Conscience, whose Bribe being taken, he was admitted to the Parsonage. O this monye makes the Common-wealth a common whore, that lies down, and let fooles ride her, and deride her, while Knaves thriv'd, and honest men went to wreck, and every Jack might be made a Sir John, for an hundred pounds, and so conclude, malignant hundred pounds have sent hundered thousands to the Divell.<sup>25</sup>

This mentality was not uncommon. In a brochure printed one year earlier and referring to the proceedings of the Parliament, there is an accusation against the king and his court:

Such was their confidence, that having corrupted and distempered the whole frame and government of the Kingdome, they did now hope to corrupt that which was the only meanes to restore all to a right frame and temper again: to which end they perswaded his Majesty to call a Parliament, not to seek counsell and advice of them, but to draw countenance and supply from them, and engage the whole Kingdome in their quarrel.<sup>26</sup>

All this, the author insisted, was the result of corruption of the local governance and courts by church officials. Although this time we do not find the term corruption in the text, its message is obvious:

The Bishops and the rest of the Clergy, did triumph in the Suspensions, Excommunications, Deprivations, and Degradations of divers painfull, learned, and pious Ministers, in the vexation and grievous oppression of great numbers of his Majesties good Subjects. The High-Commission grew to such excesse of sharpnesse and severity, as was not much lesse then the Romish Inquisition; and yet in many cases by the Archbishops power, was made much more heavy, being assisted and strengthened by the authority of the Councell Table.

The Bishops and their Courts, were as eager in the Country; and although their Jurisdiction could not reach so high in rigor, & extreimity of punishment, yet were they no lesse grievous, in respect of the generality, and multiplicity of vexations...<sup>27</sup>

In the above text there is an attack against the wrongdoings of the bishops and other church officials, yet this time state officers are seen as responsible for the running of offices and the courts in England. The corrupt nature within the Church of England extended to the state administration and became an element of its decay, destruction and lack of authority. The mid-seventeenth century was still a time when state offices were often held by and dependent on the learned churchmen. Many Englishmen complained that their courts were as severe as the Catholic Inquisition, insisting that the unjust verdicts made people fall into misery and in many cases forced them to emigrate to Holland or New England.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> *A Remonstrance of the Commons in Parliament concerning The Present State of the Kingdome*, 1643, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

The quoted remonstrance leaves no doubt – the deterioration and injustice of the state organs and courts were bound to create a huge danger to the kingdom. Similar activity can be traced in the administration of taxes, which is also due to the corruption of various state and church officials. Historians have often pointed to these issues as an important element of the conflict between the court and the peoples of England. It was indeed important for the contemporaries, as we find in the following fragment, which is identical in two diverse publications:

After that came Shipmoney, a boundlesse and endlesse tax; also taxes for compositions for Cottages, for Forest Lands, Timber, Woods &c. mighty exactions upon Customs, and Monopolies, almost of all things of necessary use; thereby inhausing the prices, to the prejudice of the whole Kingdome, yea, to the utter ruine of divers Trades and Corporations: So that multitudes of Masters and Prentices cryed out of the burthens, which is now forgotten by them, and no thankfulness is returned by them either to God or the Parliament: other cruell taxes were imposed upon buildings, together with many other oppressions, all against law, and yet law could not helpe us; all Courts of Law, and all Courts of Justice were corrupted; Judges and great Officers bought places deare, and sold their service in them dearer, to make themselves gayners; besides many Justices were displaced for doing justice, or for refusing to judge unjustly.<sup>28</sup>

Again, the text speaks for itself. The fact that identical paragraphs were copied from one author by another was not uncommon in these days. Yet the fact that a political accusation was utilised several times should give historians pause. On the one hand, it probably means that the authors, publishers and their mentors were truly interested in the essence of the text – in making the common folk aware of the state of the country. On the other, it definitely is a tool meant to make people take an active stance against the government (albeit not the monarch himself – at least not yet).

In fact the aforementioned accusations were usually directly linked to the royal court, and possibly the king himself, Lambeth Palace and William Laud, or international influence personalised in the form of Rome, the pope or French and Spanish factions. They are the ones accused of corrupting not only the English religion, but the entirety of public and social life. For instance, another author argued:

Rome had not found such an opportunity to corrupt our clergy and bring us back again to make Bricks, to subject ourselves to Peter's chair and to endeavour the advancement of the antichristian Kingdome, Romes Antagonist (Prince Henry) had not been destroyed, nor so many famous and deserving Peers had their lives shortned but onely to make way for the advancement of Romes Empire and the destruction of poore England, to what end was so many Parliaments dissolved, and

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<sup>28</sup> G. Thims, *The Protestant Informer*, London 1643, p. 5; *The Plotts Revealed and the Parliament Vindicated*, London 1642, p. 6.

Parliaments so long discontinued, but to subvert Religion and destroy the Law; to what end was the Spanish faction in much favoured.<sup>29</sup>

A careful reading of hundreds of similar brochures, pamphlets, broadsheets and booklets yields identical results. The terms ‘corrupt’ and ‘corruption’ were used by contemporary writers, and the authors, printers and their mentors saw corruption to be an inherent part of the English political body in mid-seventeenth century. They felt the need to identify it, condemn it, and point to it as the root of the crisis which was shaking England at that time. The term was utilized to mean corruption of religious doctrine, of the church itself as an institution, and finally as a sickness ruining the body of English government on all levels.

### Conclusion

Studying Early Stuart history for the past thirty years, this author never thought of looking at the seventeenth century English history through the prism of corruption. Yet when the term was applied to the analysis of that period of English history, corruption appeared as answer for many of the questions asked earlier, and appeared to be an easier mode of explaining some phenomena. In fact, one can express the hope that one day someone will take up the challenge of writing the entire history of the seventeenth century English crisis and revolution from the perspective of detecting and explaining corruption in its various forms.

The Anglican Church itself was in a state which was considered to be corrupt in many ways by its contemporaries – both in doctrine and in its organisational body. Bishops themselves were accused of numerous acts bearing the stigma of corruption. Bribery at courts, with state officials, even within the church must have been quite common and demoralising for ordinary people. The corrupt system of church courts and of church administration (at least to the level described in the analysed prints) expanded like a cancer on government organs, attacking the courts, state administration and the royal court. Seeking a way to convince the ordinary people about the gross dangers from Rome, as well as from domestic institutions and people, these authors scared the masses with primitive propaganda based on fear and hatred.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, they revealed and stressed misdeeds in both the public and governmental spheres which in most cases they referred to as the process of decay, disintegration and collapse – or, in other words, corruption.

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<sup>29</sup> J. Harris, *Englands Out-Cry for the sad distractions now lying upon the Church and the State*, London 1644, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> J. Basista, op. cit., passim; J. Peacey, op.cit., pp. 31–93.

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## KOŚCIÓŁ ANGIELSKI, SPRZECIW SPOŁECZNY I KORUPCJA

### Streszczenie

Rok 1640, w którym król Anglii Karol I zmuszony został zwołać Krótki, a następnie Długi Parlament, stał się początkiem długotrwałego kryzysu państwowości na wyspach w tej formie, w jakiej owa państwowość była dotychczas znana. Lata 1640–1642/3 przyniosły konflikt monarchy z Parlamentem, który usilnie budował swoje stronnictwo, przede wszystkim w Londynie. Dokonywano tego między innymi posługując się niezwykle agresywną, liczną i powszechną propagandą. Olbrzymia ilość druków propagandowych, broszurek, pism agitujących w tysiącach egzemplarzy opuszczała maszyny drukarskie. Poruszane przez owe druki problemy ówczesnej Anglii były liczne i różnorodne, od krytyki podatków i sposobu zarządzania państwem, po krytykę oficjalnego Kościoła i jego pasterzy. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest pojęciu korupcji i jego występowaniu w rzeczonyj literaturze. Okazuje się, że z licznych możliwych znaczeń pojęcia korupcja najczęściej używano go w znaczeniu zepsucia, rozkładu. W drugiej kolejności pojawiają się oskarżenia o korupcję, czyli przekupstwo. Było one formułowane w odniesieniu do najwyższej postawionych przedstawicieli episkopatu Kościoła w Anglii. Te właśnie znaczenia, poparte cytata-  
tami z ówczesnej literatury, zostały zarysowane i omówione w pracy.

