

ambassador's wife'. This was not received at all well in official circles, because the Queen had just signed a commercial treaty with Portugal. He spent a week in the Fleet Prison, from whence he wrote to his patron, Lord Burghley, with an air of resignation, that there 'a man may quietly be acquainted with God'. Such was the stuff of which some of Burghley's parliamentary clients were made.³⁷

They were crucial to the success of his parliamentary management, both in the short and long term. In the short term there was the parliament of 1572, designed by the Council to persuade the Queen to liquidate Norfolk and Mary Stuart. At this point it is pertinent to recollect the names of some of Burghley's allies and clients: Bacon, Digges, Bell, Dannett, Heyward, Dalton, Norton, Fleetwood and Wilbraham. Bacon's opening address hinted at the solution which was required. Bell was chosen as speaker of the Commons. Norton delivered twelve speeches against Norfolk and Mary. And he was supported by Digges, Dannett and Wilbraham. The Commons called for members to 'exhibit ... in writing' reasons why the Duke should die. A week later, Norton handed in his marshalled arguments to Speaker Bell, whilst Dannett and Digges had also drafted carefully argued cases. Perhaps the relentless pressure worked. Two days later Norfolk was executed.

There remained Mary Stuart. In a joint conference with the Lords on the most desirable course of action, the Commons' delegates included Dalton, Heyward, Fleetwood, Norton and Wilbraham. The Commons and Lords opted for Mary's present attainder for treason (with its attendant penalties) and her removal from the succession. However, Elizabeth informed them that she preferred simply to nullify Mary's claim to the crown, with attainder as the penalty if she offended again. Speaker Bell, acting on the Council's prompting, recommended another joint conference with the Lords. That conference resolved that the bishops, civil lawyers and members of both houses should draft biblical, legal and political arguments in favour of Mary's death. Most of these have survived—amongst Thomas Norton's papers! Moreover they were 'produced' within 48 hours—an almost impossible logistical exercise, given their length and complexity. It suggests conciliar foresight and pre-planning, with Burghley overseeing all. At the end Elizabeth frustrated all their efforts. Burghley lamented, 'All that we have laboured for ... was by her Majesty ... deferred.' Nevertheless this episode demonstrates Burghley's dependence on his parliamentary clients.³⁸

In the longer term that dependence did not alter. Norton, and others too, were fertile in time-saving devices which would expedite official business in the Commons. Moreover Burghley,