

1571. It was a genuine concern not only of 'puritans' but of the protestant governing class as a whole—including Cecil. He could depend on a sympathetic response from both houses in his attempt to pressurise Elizabeth into reform. Fifteen bishops had earlier petitioned her on the subject. When they received no more than a tongue lashing the Cecil connexion swung into action. Norton and William Strickland introduced the reform bills and they, together with Bell, Dalton, Monson and Yelverton, all of whom were lawyers and clients of Cecil or Bacon, ardently pursued the cause in debate and committee. That all of their efforts foundered on the rock of an obstinate imperious queen was partly the consequence of the tactless radicalism of Strickland, the only participant who was not associated with the secretary. This failure does not alter the fact that parliaments were used by Cecil to coerce Elizabeth and that his connexion, his clientele, was his instrument of action.³⁴

Parliament met again a year later. It was an emergency session; summoned to advise the Queen. The Ridolfi Plot, a conspiracy to marry the Duke of Norfolk to Mary Stuart and to depose or kill Elizabeth, had been uncovered. Norfolk was alive but under sentence of death. Mary was a refugee and prisoner in England. The Council wanted drastic action against them both. But already a change had occurred which altered the course of Elizabethan parliamentary history. In 1571 William Cecil, Elizabeth's most trusted adviser, had been appointed Lord Treasurer, and he had been elevated to the House of Lords as Baron Burghley. No longer was he personally present to supervise proceedings in the large, unwieldy, inefficient House of Commons. This had an important consequence: he had to employ some of his politically conscious and ambitious clients as his parliamentary 'men-of-business'—as his eyes, ears, and managers.

Before we examine this parliament, it is worth looking briefly at the Burghley connexion. Of course it would be impossible to produce a roll call and explore it to its limits. His longevity, political success, unparalleled record in high office and growing wealth meant that the ramifications of his clientele were seemingly endless. Certainly his relations with other men took many forms. Therefore we propose only to identify certain categories of clientage and illustrate them with examples of those men who served his turn in parliament. Some were related by marriage or blood—above all Lord Keeper Bacon, presiding officer of the House of Lords. Burghley and Bacon had married daughters of a country gentleman, Sir Anthony Cooke. Bacon's clients included Thomas Digges and the lawyer Robert Bell who in 1572 was Speaker, presiding officer of the Commons. Amongst Burghley's