

SUMMARY: The document below is an undated letter from Sir Christopher Hatton to Queen Elizabeth which appears to reference a private conversation between Hatton and the Queen the previous evening. The letter appears to date from early 1581 when Oxford was under house arrest after having been committed to the Tower by the Queen for fathering an illegitimate son by Anne Vavasour. It should be noted that the letter cannot date from later than 1584 since it refers to the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza, who was expelled from England in that year.

According to Nicolas, p. 496, *infra*, a copy of the original letter is catalogued as Harleian MSS 993, f. 75. However according to the Harleian catalogue, Vol. III, p. 472, the letter is catalogued as Harley 6993, f. 41:

*Sir Christopher Hatton, Vice-Chamberlain to the Queen, clearing his innocence of a report that he had revealed some expression of her Majesty's to her Turk. No date.*

It has been claimed that 'Turk' was the Queen's affectionate nickname for Oxford. However if the term 'Turk' in this letter does refer to Oxford, it would only establish that Sir Christopher Hatton used the term, not the Queen. It is possible, of course, to draw the inference from Hatton's use of the term that the Queen had also used it during their private conversation. However if the Queen did use the term, it was not an affectionate nickname. Some contemporary quotations from the *OED*:

*a. (Applied to) any one having qualities historically attributed to Turks; a cruel, rigorous, or tyrannical person; any one behaving barbarically or savagely. Also: a bad-tempered or unmanageable person; a man who treats his wife harshly.*

1536 *Exhort. North 56 in F. J. Furnivall Ballads from MSS I. 306 Thes Sothorne turkes pervertyng owre lawe.*

1578 *J. Lyly Euphues f. 5v Was neuer any Impe so wicked & barbarous, any Turke so vile and brutish.*

See also:

1548 *Hall's Vnion: Edward IV f. ccxxxiii [He] hated hym more then a Panym, or a Turke.*

1549 *Bk. Common Prayer (STC 16267) Celebr. Holye Communion f. lii Haue mercy vpon all Jewes, Turkes, Infidels, and heretikes.*

See also:

?1592 *Trag. Solyman & Perseda sig. F1v What say these prisoners, will they turne Turke, or no?*

1604 *Shakespeare Hamlet iii. ii. 264 If the rest of my fortunes turne Turk with me.*

See also:

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1598 *J. Florio Worlde of Wordes Manduco, a disguised or vglie picture vsed in shewes to make children afraid,..a turke, or a bug-beare.*

See also:

1608 *Shakespeare King Lear xi. 83 In woman out paramord the Turke .*

If the Queen did use the term ‘Turk’ in reference to Oxford in early 1581, it appears to reflect the anger which had caused her to imprison him in the Tower.

See *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. III, p. 472.

See also Nicolas, Harris, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. 496-7 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/memoirsoflifetim00nicouoft#page/496>.

See also Brazil, Robert, ‘Oxford and the Turk’, *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Winter, 2003), pp. 16-18 at:

<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/shakespeare-oxford-newsletter/>

If the wounds of the thought were not most dangerous of all without speedy dressing, I should not now trouble your Majesty with the lines of my complaint, and if whatsoever came from you were not either very gracious or grievous to me, what you said would not sink so deeply in my bosom.

My profession hath been, is, and ever shall be to your Majesty all duty within order, all reverent love without measure, and all truth without blame, insomuch as when I shall not be found such to your Highness as Caesar sought to have his wife to himself, not only without sin, but also not to be suspected, I wish my spirit divided from my body as his spouse was from his bed.

And therefore upon yesternight’s words I am driven to say to your Majesty, either to satisfy wrong conceit or to answer false report, that if the speech you used of your Turk did ever pass my pen or lips to any creature out of your Highness’ hearing but to my Lord of Burghley (with whom I have talked both of the man and the matter), I desire no less condemnation than as a traitor, and no more pardon than his punishment.

And further, if ever I either spake or sent to the ambassadors of France, Spain or Scotland, or have accompanied, to my knowledge, any that confers with them, I do renounce all good from your Majesty on earth and all grace from God in heaven.

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Which assurance if your Highness think not sufficient, upon the knees of my heart I humbly crave at your Majesty's hands, not so much for my satisfaction as your own surety, make the perfectest trial hereof, for if upon such occasions it shall please your Majesty to sift the chaff from the wheat, the corn of your commonwealth would be more pure, and mixed grains would less infect the sinews of your surety, which God most strengthen to your Majesty's best and longest preservation.