
SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 15 June 1560 from John de Vere (1512-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, to the Privy Council, asking direction concerning Thomas Holland, parson of Little Burstead, who has confessed that before the last Christmas in London he heard the former vicar of Stortford in Hertfordshire say that one was sent to the Tower for reporting that the Queen was with child.

My most hearty commendations to your good Lordships remembered, it may please the same to understand that the 10th of this present there was sent unto me from two justices of Essex one Thomas Holland, parson of Little Burstead, for certain great disorders and most slanderous crimes by him maliciously uttered against the Queen her excellent Majesty;

And forasmuch as the same being but words the punishment of the law extendeth but to the loss of his ears or £100 fine, so far as I can learn, and yet the heinousness of th' offence might have tended very much to withdraw the hearts of her Majesty's subjects from their allegiance and due obedience, it standeth doubtful unto me what might thereof be construed.

The priest I have examined divers and sundry times, and both by lenity and otherwise have sought to make him confess the articles deposed by sundry persons which herewith I send unto your good Lordships, but cannot by any means get him thereunto. Only this he saith, that being at London before the last Christenmas he met with one in Cheapside that was sometime vicar of Storford [=Stortford?] in Hertfordshire, whose name or dwelling-place he is utterly ignorant of, who told him that there was one gone to the Tower for saying the Queen's Majesty was with child. Other confession I can in now wise get of him, wherefore I have thought good to advertise your Lordships of the circumstances hereof, and to desire your letters I may understand from you what your order shall be in this matter, whether ye will have him punished here in the country, and in what sort, or whether ye will have him examined before your Lordships, or otherwise delivered in the open session of oyer and terminer or general gaol delivery.

And thus I take leave of your good Lordships for this time.

From Hedingham Castle the 15th of June 1560.

Your good Lordships' assuredly,

Oxenford.