

# Scaffold Speech

*Lady Jane Grey*

Anglican · Reformation · Confession

STROMATA 16

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## INTRODUCTION

Delivered on February 12, 1554, by a seventeen-year-old who had been queen of England for nine days, these words were spoken on the scaffold at Tower Green moments before her beheading. The speech distinguishes carefully between the political charge for which she was condemned and the spiritual reckoning she undertakes before God — accepting the second while quietly refusing the first. Its insistence on salvation through Christ's merits alone, spoken at the moment of execution under a Catholic queen, made it a touchstone for English Protestant martyrology and shaped the genre of the godly scaffold speech that Foxe would soon canonize. Read it slowly: it is a confession, a closing argument, and a final act of catechesis compressed into a few minutes of public speech.

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My lords, and you good christian people, which come to see me die, I am under a law, and by that law, as a never erring judge, I am condemned to die, not for any thing I have offended the Queen's Majesty, for I will wash my hands guiltless thereof, and deliver to my God a soul as pure from such trespass, as innocence from injustice; but only for that I consented to the thing which I was enforced unto, constraint making the law believe I did that which I never understood. Notwithstanding, I have offended Almighty God in that I have followed over-much the lust of mine own flesh, and the pleasures of this wretched world, neither have I lived according to the knowledge that God hath given me, for which cause God hath appointed unto me this kind of death, and that most worthily, according to my deserts; how be it, I thank him heartily that he hath given me time to repent my sins here in this world, and to reconcile myself to my redeemer, whom my former vanities have in a great measure displeased. Wherefore, my lords, and all you good christian people, I must earnestly desire you all to pray with and for me whilst I am yet alive, that God of his infinite goodness and mercy will forgive me my sins, how numberless and grievous soever against him: and I beseech you all to bear me witness that I here die a true christian woman, professing and avouching from my soul that I trust to be saved by the blood, passion, and merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour only, and by none other means; casting far behind me all the works and merits of mine own actions, as things so far short of the true duty I owe, that I quake to think how much they may stand up against me. And now, I pray you all pray for me, and with me.

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These texts are drawn from *Memoirs and Remains of Lady Jane Grey*, a compilation of her letters, prayers, disputations, and scaffold writings. The Internet Archive copy used here is available at <https://archive.org/details/memoirsremainsof00grey>. The compilation was first published in the nineteenth century; the letters to Bullinger were originally in Latin and appear here in English translation (translator unattributed in this edition). The translations are themselves pre-1900 and are public domain. Original spelling has been lightly modernised in places by the nineteenth-century editors; the texts are otherwise presented as found. No independent transcription has been made against manuscript sources.

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/scaffold-speech>