

# Lady Jane Grey and Reformation Day

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*If God do help thee,  
Hate shall not hurt thee;  
If God do fail thee,  
Then shall not labour prevail thee.  
- Lady Jane<sup>1</sup>*

On 24 June 1509, Henry of the Tudors became King of England, having been married 13 days before to Catherine, the first of his 6 wives.<sup>2</sup> Eighteen years-old and a well-educated renaissance man, Henry began a long and bloody 38 year reign that would extend to Ireland, Wales and Britain.

Ten years before this, a monk had begun studying for the priesthood in Germany. It was a torturous experience for this honest man as he could not find peace for his soul in the confession box, the Hail Mary's, the prayers for the dead or in those awful indulgences. And so he studied his Bible and one day the Lord opened his heart to understand Romans 1:17 and justification by faith. Two years later, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses (complaints) to a church door in Wittenburg and the Reformation was sparked.

As Luther continued to write, men in England were avidly reading contraband copies of John Wycliffe's (first printed in 1382) and William Tyndale's (first printed in 1526) translations of the Bible. This reading of the text of the Scriptures was creating an atmosphere ripe for change – men and women were tired of the intrusions of the Roman Catholic Pope and his bishops and now saw the need for personal faith in Christ alone for salvation by grace alone.

## Henry and the Reformation

At first, Henry was an enemy of Luther and the Reformation.<sup>3</sup> But circumstances would change his mind. When Catherine could not produce the male heir Henry so desperately desired, he sought to have the Pope annul the marriage that he might try to have a son with another woman. The Pope, however, refused; and thus converged a host of political, selfish, sensual and monarchial motives to one common point. The opportunistic Henry knew that the only way to lose Catherine and gain her maid-of-honour Anne Boleyn<sup>4</sup> as his new wife, was to have the first marriage annulled. Since the Pope refused to do this, he began a process of systematically cutting off ties to Rome

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this paper is indebted to Faith Cook's excellent biography, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2004). I have footnoted direct quotes, but almost all of the content of this paper is summarized from this work.

<sup>2</sup> Henry claimed that this lack of a male heir was because his marriage was "blighted in the eyes of God." Catherine had been his late brother's wife, and it was therefore against biblical teachings for Henry to have married her (Leviticus 20:21); a special dispensation from Pope Julius II had been needed to allow the wedding in the first place. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_VIII\\_of\\_England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII_of_England)

<sup>3</sup> Henry's Catholicism was secure: in 1521 he had defended the Catholic Church from Martin Luther's accusations of heresy in a book he wrote, probably with considerable help from Thomas More, entitled *The Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, for which he was awarded the title "Defender of the Faith" (Fidei Defensor) by Pope Leo X. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Reformation)

<sup>4</sup> Anne had come to court in March 1522. She was the sister of Mary who was involved in an extramarital affair with Henry at that time.

and to poor Catherine who would die lonely and still in love to her King in 1536... the very year Henry and Frances Grey would welcome their first daughter into the world: Lady Jane Grey.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the more upset Henry became with Rome, the more the Protestant clergy were able to further their cause. He needed to lose Roman Catholicism in order to divorce Catherine. Of course, this was good news for the reformation in England but it must not be forgotten that Henry was a friend of the Reformation not as a Protestant believer, but out of necessity or expediency. As we will see, many held to the Reformed faith for the same reason – it got them what they want.

## The Young Lady Jane and a Future King

As Henry continued to go through wives like some people go through money, Lady Jane Grey was being brought up in slightly uncommon manner for aristocratic women of the day. Henry and Frances were not good parents. They were far more interested in their leisure, money and personal social advancement than in their three daughters. And they began to see that one of those daughters might become very useful in meeting their aspirations to greatness.

In all, Henry had given birth to three mostly-legitimate children: Mary, Elizabeth and Edward. Before his death, he had arranged to bypass the first two girls and ensure that Edward would be his replacement. All of this was concocted through acts of parliament and so was common knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

The Greys looked at this like the nasty stepmother in Cinderella... if they could get the future King Edward to take Lady Jane as his wife, then they would be elevated to some of the highest social positions of the day. Thus, Jane was assigned a tutor and prepared to become the next queen of England.

In the providence of God, that tutor was a protestant believer by the name of John Aylmer. The twenty year old Cambridge graduate was to prepare the Grey girls for court life and at the age of six, Jane was learning Greek, Latin, French, Spanish and reading her Tyndale English Bible.<sup>7</sup> Jane was not an ordinary learner, and thus, she was introduced to court with some attention.

Not three years later, her parents decided that her prospects for marriage would greatly increase if she were to remain permanently at court. Thus, at the tender age of nine, Lady Jane was offered to Henry's sixth wife Catherine Parr as a maid-of-honour.<sup>8</sup> What a remarkable providence of God this turned out to be!

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<sup>5</sup> Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Suffolk and Lady Frances Brandon.

<sup>6</sup> These various acts declared the first two daughters illegitimate by reason of the marriages to their mothers being illegitimate.

<sup>7</sup> Part of her zeal for learning might have been her home life: "I will tell you a truth which perchance ye will marvel at. One of the greatest benefits that God ever gave me is that he sent me so sharp and severe parents and so gentle a schoolmaster. For when I am in the presence of Father or Mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it as it were in such weight, measure and number, even so perfectly as God made the world; or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently sometimes with pinches, nips and bobs and other ways (which I will not name for the honour I bear them), so without measure misordered, that I think myself in hell, till time comes that I must go to Mr Aylmer, who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing while I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping because whatsoever I do else but learning is full of grief, trouble, fear and wholly misliking to me." (1550).

<sup>8</sup> Maids of Honour were the junior attendants on a Queen in the royal households of England and later of the United Kingdom. Traditionally, a Queen regnant had eight Maids of Honour, while a Queen consort had four. A Maid of Honour was a maiden, meaning that she was unmarried, and was usually young. Lady Jane Grey, for example, served as a Maid-of-Honour to Queen Katherine Parr in about 1546-48, when Jane was only about ten to twelve years old. Maids of Honour should not be confused with Maids of the Court. Maids of Honour were almost always in their sixteenth year or older. Under Mary I and Elizabeth I, maids of honour were at court as a kind of finishing school, with the hope of making a good marriage. Some of the Maids of Honour were paid, while others were not.

Whenever she was able... Jane Grey would join a number of others who, like Katherine herself, were sincere Christians gathering together regularly to study the Scriptures. Whatever ulterior motives her parents may have had for placing Jane in the royal Court at this time, a divine purpose transcended any human arrangements. During this period of her life the teachings of the Bible, carefully inculcated by John Aylmer, became regenerating truth in the child's heart. Forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God, not through any acts of merit on the part of the sinner, but through the grace and mercy of God in Christ, became a felt experience for Jane as she found in the Son of God both a Saviour and friend. Now prayer was no mere formality but a path to personal communion with God.

Historians, with little understanding of true heart-religion, and with an accompanying measure of prejudice against any for whom faith in God is an all-consuming dedication, use such words as 'fanatical' and 'extreme' when they speak of the religious zeal of Lady Jane and of Prince Edward. The truth remains that these children had been caught up in an astonishing work of God, loosely called the Reformation — one that brought spiritual renewal to generations of men and women and which would affect the whole course of world history.

And God *was* marvellously at work in Edward. Surrounded by such men as Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the heir to the throne was graciously saved by God at a young age and full of zeal for that heavenly Kingdom.

Henry VIII died on 28 January 1547, when Edward was only nine, but he ascended to the throne with a sense of calling that he was to rule before God first.

This was a little tricky to do as the actual reigning was accomplished through a council until the boy reached maturity. At least, that is the way it was supposed to be!

## Politics!

To understand what happened to King Edward and Lady Jane, you must understand something of the culture of England at this time. There was a definitive aristocracy that controlled land and money – and that smallish group had no intention of sharing. Thus, the average Brit lived a very difficult life and had no hope of “moving on up.”

Most of the rich had servants to do all their work, so parents like the Greys could spend endless hours gambling and sporting while their money only made more money. All of that money and the jockeying for position, combined with a view of marriage that was for economic or prestige sake only led to a culture ripe with intrigue, gossip, lies, maneuvering, betrayals, deception and even murder. As much as the Reformation was making inroads into England, this was the ethos of the ruling class, including those closest to the boy King Edward.

Thus, upon Henry VIII's death, Edward Seymour (the boy's uncle) quickly assumed custody of his nephew. This was a shrewd political move, for the country was to be governed under Edward as a figurehead, by a regency of 16 men. By assuming custody, Edward Seymour essentially took control of the 9 year old King Edward and thus the country. His interests were not pure. Neither were his brother's, Thomas Seymour, who spent the rest of his earthly life trying to usurp his brother and gain control of the king... a scheme that resulted in his harsh death.

## Thomas Seymour and The Grey Family

To get to King Edward, Thomas Seymour had been working his angles with the Grey family, holding out a promise of marriage for Lady Jane to the King. This was not entirely out of the question as King Edward and Lady Jane had spent significant time together, were intellectual peers and shared a similar love for Christ. Thus, Thomas Seymour convinced Henry Grey to essentially sell him Jane for 2000 pounds.

Thomas Seymour had also married Catherine Parr – the widow of King Henry.<sup>9</sup> This was the same Catherine that Lady Jane had served as a maid of honour. Now Jane was happily reunited with this Christian woman and became a ward of the Seymours. But Thomas Seymour's intentions were duplicitous. He wanted Lady Jane in order to wrest control of King Edward out of his brother's hands. By offering her to the boy King in marriage, he would take the place of influence as "father" of the bride. But his plans failed and in desperation he attempted a bizarre kidnapping of King Edward. It likely would have worked if not for Edward's dog that fended off Seymour at the door until it was shot and killed by the intruder. But the sound of the pistol alerted Edward's guards who rushed in and arrested Seymour. Yes, boys, poor Edward lost his dog... but Thomas Seymour lost his head!

Not long before this incident, Seymour's wife Catherine had died from complications in childbirth. The lone official mourner at the funeral of the former queen was the 11-year old Lady Jane. Thus, Jane lost her guardians and was returned to her unpleasant parents.

## The Fox: John Dudley

Lurking in the background through all this intrigue was John Dudley. This member of the council had decided to let the two Seymour brothers destroy each other then move in to control the King. Essentially, that is what took place.

While Edward and Thomas Seymour wrestled for control, Dudley earned the confidence of the King and convinced the Greys to allow him to become Lady Jane's new guardian. Why he desired control of Jane will become clear in a moment. But with events transpiring so that Edward Seymour was also put to death, Dudley effectually became the most powerful man in the country.

## Life for Jane

Jane's family life was no picnic, but her privileged position opened remarkable doors for her. She had begun to correspond (mainly in Latin and Greek) with some of the leading reformers of the day; men such as Martin Bucer<sup>10</sup> and Heinrich Bullinger.<sup>11</sup> Not only that, her studies had been greatly helped by more evangelical tutors like Miles Coverdale, William Tyndale's former assistant. In other words, her faith was growing at an incredible pace. Add to this her natural giftedness in learning, and one can understand how Jane could grasp so much of the Gospel and communicate it so effectively in such spiritually dark and politically uncertain times.

Meanwhile, John Dudley had been made Duke of Northumberland. He had also finagled his way into being one of King Edward's trusted counselors.<sup>12</sup> Since Dudley was privy to the King, he was one of the first to realize that Ed-

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Thomas Seymour's sister, Jane Seymour, was the third wife of King Henry and also the mother of the soon-to-be King Edward.

<sup>10</sup> The pastor who attempted to forge an understanding between Luther and Zwingli in the area of the Eucharist by arranging for a meeting between the two.

<sup>11</sup> Replaced Zwingli after his death in Zurich.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Grey was not doing so badly himself, having also become a Duke through the death of an older relative.

ward would not live out his 16<sup>th</sup> year. Tuberculosis was slowly killing the young Christian King and Dudley began to put his plan into action. His plan was to marry Lady Jane to his own son, Guilford. This would bring his family into the Tudor line and open a very possible door for the big prize.

Since King Henry had declared his first two daughters (Mary and Elizabeth) illegitimate, they were not (theoretically at least) in line for the throne. Moreover, as Dudley told the sickly King Edward, if either of them were to become Queen, they would undoubtedly return the country to Catholicism. It was probably this point that most provoked King Edward to write, by hand, the "Devise for the Succession."<sup>13</sup> In it, he excluded Mary and Elizabeth from the royal line and identified Lady Jane Grey as his immediate successor. Although this plan made some sense it was met with great anxiety and angst by the King's Privy Council and advisors. In the end, either through Northumberland's threatenings or mere pity for the dying boy, over 100 nobles signed the document as witnesses.

Guilford and Jane were married on May 25 1553. The marriage was not consummated as Dudley desired to keep annulment an option should the king live. But he need not have worried. After a long and tortuous battle, King Edward was picked up in the arms of his lifelong friend, Sir Henry Sidney, where he died on July 6 1553. His last words were, "Lord, have mercy upon me – take my spirit."

## The Dominoes of Death

Dudley ordered silence concerning the King's death. He also ordered the immediate removal of Lady Jane from her home to London. What a shock it must have been for her to enter Syon House and to have Dukes and Duchesses stoop to kiss her hand or bow before her. Guilford was also there and Dudley began a lengthy speech in which he disclosed to all gathered how King Edward had both died and named Lady Jane his successor.

At this point the Duke turned to Jane, doubtless expecting some grateful response, and spoke to her directly,

'Therefore you should cheerfully take upon you the name, title and estates of Queen of England, France [England still had possession of several French towns], and Ireland.'

It was all too much. The grievous news of her cousin's death and the even greater shock that the crown had been left to her, was more than the girl could sustain. The colour drained from her cheeks as she swayed and fell to the floor in a dead faint. It seemed that no one moved to help her. Moments later she came round, and still those silent figures stood there watching her. Terror overwhelmed her and she burst into tears: tears first of all for Edward... 'so noble a prince', she managed to sob. Then controlling herself as she had long learnt to do in her difficult childhood, she spoke clearly and deliberately: 'The crown is not my right and pleaseth me not. The Lady Mary is the rightful heir'<sup>14</sup>

The entire crowd began to chastise her for this response (after all, their collective good depended on her ascent to the throne) and Lady Jane tried to take it all in. Finally, while still on her knees she said, "If what hath been given to me is lawfully mine, may thy divine Majesty grant me such grace that I may govern to thy glory and service, to the advantage of this realm."<sup>15</sup> But the repulsion Lady Jane felt for this office was a clear foreboding of what was to come.

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix for a photograph of this document.

<sup>14</sup> Cook, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Cook, 127.

## Lady Mary

Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, had been doing everything in his power to keep the news of Edward's death from reaching Lady Mary. He was also trying to capture her in order to prevent her from attempting a counter-claim to the throne. He was unsuccessful in both attempts.

Mary heard of Edward's passing and immediately went into hiding. As Lady Jane went to her coronation, Mary was gathering troops and preparing for war. She knew Jane was a mere pawn of Northumberland and she was equally sure she was the rightful heir to the throne. Most of the common people of England agreed with her. So nine days after Queen Jane had begun her reign, Mary arrived in London and demanded the throne. Queen Jane gladly removed her crown and told her women, "I am glad I am no longer Queen."

London rejoiced at their new Queen Mary, who in her speech to the masses promised a return to freedom of religion. She also sought to act kindly toward Jane, imprisoning her with the intention of release in later days. Northumberland would be killed for treason and like so many of that day, re-converted to Catholicism before his death. More than likely he thought this would buy him his life. He told Catholic Bishop Gardiner: "I would do penance all the days of my life, if it were but in a mouse hole. Is there no hope of mercy?" But he who loved his life did not find it when the spiteful Gardiner replied, "I think you must die." As Lady Jane watched his death from jail, she was heard to remark: "I pray God that I, nor no friend of mine, die so."

With Northumberland gone and the balance of power firmly shifted into Queen Mary's control, it seemed like there might yet be good for Lady Jane. She was kept imprisoned in the Tower of London but given special privileges to dine with the Gentleman Jailor and his wife. Guilford was also held in the Tower and after some time the two were allowed to occasionally see one another. But while life somewhat eased for the prisoners, the outside world was reeling with changes.

Many of the men who had supported the Reformation in England now renounced the "new faith" and returned to Rome. Dr. Harding, one of Jane's former family chaplains and a highly regarded evangelical ran back to Catholicism. Once Jane heard of this she wrote a long letter to him that ended:

"Last of all, let the lively remembrance of the last day be always before your eyes, remembering the terror that such shall be in at that time, with the runagates and fugitives from Christ, which, setting more by the world than by heaven, more by their life than by him that gave them life, did shrink, yea, did clean fall away, from him that forsook not them: and, contrariwise, the inestimable joys prepared for them, that fearing no peril, nor dreading death, have manfully fought, and victoriously triumphed over all power of darkness, over hell, death, and damnation, through their most redoubted Captain, Christ, who now stretcheth out his arms to receive you, ready to fall upon your neck and kiss you, and, last of all, to feast you with the dainties and delicates of his own precious blood: which undoubtedly, if it might stand with his determinate purpose, he would not let to shed again, rather than you should he lost. To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, praise, and glory everlasting. Amen.

"Be constant, be constant; fear not for any pain:

Christ hath redeemed thee, and heaven is thy gain."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> These and any quotes that are not footnoted are taken from Foxe's Book of Martyrs – multiple editions.

Her own parents effectively disowned her and pledged allegiance to Mary. Not even when Jane was finally brought to trial did they come to visit her.

Judge Morgan presided over the trial in which Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Lady Jane, Guilford, and his two brothers were charged with treason. All but Cranmer plead guilty and after a brief trial all were sentenced to die. Still, most believed Queen Mary would pardon the 15 year old Jane.<sup>17</sup>

Jane wrote a prayer at this time, part of which read:

Give me grace, therefore, to tarry thy leisure, and patiently to bear thy works, assuredly knowing, that as thou canst, so thou wilt, deliver me, when it shall please thee, nothing doubting or mistrusting thy goodness towards me; for thou knowest better what is good for me than I do: therefore do with me in all things what thou wilt, and plague me what way thou wilt. Only, in the mean time, arm me, I beseech thee, with thy armour, that I may stand fast, my loins being girded about with verity, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and shod with the shoes prepared by the gospel of peace: above all things taking to me the shield of faith, wherewith I may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and taking the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is thy most holy word: praying always with all manner of prayer and supplication, that I may refer myself wholly to thy will, abiding thy pleasure, and comforting myself in those troubles that it shall please thee to send me; seeing such troubles be profitable for me, and seeing I am assuredly persuaded that it cannot be but well, all that thou doest. Hear me, O merciful Father! for his sake, whom thou wouldst should be a sacrifice for my sins: to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory. Amen.

## Wyatt's Rebellion

It is here our story takes its saddest turn. Henry Grey had reportedly bought his freedom from Mary by abandoning his daughter and returning to Catholicism. Not long after that, he was swept up into what is called Wyatt's rebellion – an attempt to dislodge Mary and return Jane to the throne. It was a failed attempt that ended in the death of many and the final arrest of Jane's father.

It also put Queen Mary into a very difficult position. No doubt there would be others who would not appreciate how she was restoring England to Roman Catholicism and they would also seek to revolt. As long as Jane and Guilford lived, they would remain a threat to her reign because of their claim to the throne and their evangelical beliefs. Thus, with some measure of reluctance, she signed their death warrant.

Feckenham, a respected Catholic priest was sent to Lady Jane to tell her the news and to attempt to convert her. He was an accomplished orator and debater and was fully confident he would win the girl's soul before the axe fell. Their private conversations seemed to make no progress, but Feckenham did manage to convince her to join him in a public debate on the next day. One wonders if he regretted this in the end, for Jane was no easy prey. The exchange went on for quite some time and was recorded. Here is a sample:

*Feckenham.*—"How shall we love our neighbour?"

*Jane.*—"To love our neighbour is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to give drink to the thirsty, and to do to him as we would do to ourselves."

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<sup>17</sup> Morgan wrote that Lady Jane looked him full in the face as he announced his verdict. He went mad 6 months later and died crying out in despair, "Take the Lady Jane from me!" He could not erase the image of that innocent face from his mind.

*Feckenham.*—"Why? then it is necessary unto salvation to do good works also, and it is not sufficient only to believe."

*Jane.*—"I deny that, and I affirm that faith only saveth: but it is meet for a Christian, in token that he followeth his Master Christ, to do good works; yet may we not say that they profit to our salvation. For when we have done all, yet we be unprofitable servants, and faith only in Christ's blood saveth us."

*Feckenham.*—"How many sacraments are there?"

*Jane.*—"Two: the one the sacrament of baptism, and the other the sacrament of the Lord's supper."

*Feckenham.*—"No, there are seven."

*Jane.*—"By what Scripture find you that?"

*Feckenham.*—"Well, we will talk of that hereafter..."

Like the martyrs before and after her, Jane was also questioned on her understanding of the Lord's Supper. The denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation, where the bread used in the rite supposedly becomes the actual body of Jesus was a test case for Catholic orthodoxy. So the questioning continued:

*Feckenham.*—"Why? what do you receive in that sacrament? Do you not receive the very body and blood of Christ?"

*Jane.*—"No surely, I do not so believe. I think that at the supper I neither receive flesh nor blood, but bread and wine: which bread when it is broken, and the wine when it is drunken, put me in remembrance how that for my sins the body of Christ was broken, and his blood shed on the cross; and with that bread and wine I receive the benefits that come by the breaking of his body, and shedding of his blood, for our sins on the cross."

*Feckenham.*—"Why, doth not Christ speak these words, Take, eat, this is my body? Require you any plainer words? Doth he not say, it is his body?"

*Jane.*—"I grant he saith so; and so he saith, I am the vine, I am the door; but he is never the more for that the door or the vine. Doth not St. Paul say, He calleth things that are not, as though they were? God forbid that I should say, that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ: for then either I should pluck away my redemption, or else there were two bodies, or two Christs. One body was tormented on the cross, and if they did eat another body, then had he two bodies: or if his body were eaten, then was it not broken upon the cross; or if it were broken upon the cross, it was not eaten of his disciples."

By the end of the debate, Feckenham was heartbroken. He had grown to genuinely appreciate the remarkable Lady Jane, but was convinced she was a heretic.

Thus he left her saying, that he was sorry for her:

*Feckenham.*—"For I am sure," quoth he, "that we two shall never meet."

*Jane.*—"True it is," said she, "that we shall never meet, except God turn your heart; for I am assured, unless you repent and turn to God, you are in an evil case. And I pray God, in the bowels of his mercy, to



send you his Holy Spirit; for he hath given you his great gift of utterance, if it pleased him also to open the eyes of your heart.”

Feckenham was so moved by his time with Lady Jane that he offered to accompany her as a friend to the scaffold where she would die. Forbidden from having any Protestant clergy with her, she accepted this offer.

## To the Scaffold

The nine day Queen, spent the next hours preparing for death. She wrote evangelistic letters to family,<sup>18</sup> gave away her few remaining possessions, and tried to encourage, by a brief note, her 17 year old husband, Guilford.

Guilford was to be beheaded on the same day as Jane and she watched as he marched behind the axe man past her window. What thoughts went through that 16 year old girls’ mind as her husband walked away to his death? It was not long until the horse cart carrying his lifeless body and severed head drove past. And Jane waited in her room for a knock on the door.

It soon followed and Lady Jane made her way to the scaffold. After mounting it she asked permission to speak to the small crowd allowed to witness her death. Here is how John Foxe recorded the sad event:

“Good people, I am come hither to die, and by a law I am condemned to the same. The fact against the queen’s Highness was unlawful, and the consenting thereunto by me: but, touching the procurement and desire thereof by me, or on my behalf, I do wash my hands thereof in innocency before God, and the face of you, good Christian people, this day:” and therewith she wrung her hands, wherein she had her book. Then said she, “I pray you all, good Christian people, to bear me witness that I die a true Christian woman, and that I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ: and I confess, that when I did know the word of God, I neglected the same, loved myself and the world; and therefore this plague and punishment is happily and worthily happened unto me for my sins; and yet I thank God, that of his goodness he hath thus given me a time and respite to repent. And now, good people, while I am alive, I pray you assist me with your prayers.” And then, kneeling down, she turned her to Feckenham, saying, “Shall I say this psalm?” And he said, “Yea.” Then said she the psalm of *Miserere mei Deus* [Psalm 51] in English, in most devout manner, throughout to the end; and then she stood up, and gave her maiden, Mistress Ellen, her gloves and handkerchief, and her book to Master Bruges. And then she untied her gown, and the hangman pressed upon her to help her off with it; but she, desiring him to let her alone, turned towards her two gentlewomen, who helped her off therewith, and also with her frowes, paaft, and neckerchief, giving to her a fair handkerchief to knit about her eyes.

Then the hangman kneeled down and asked her forgiveness, whom she forgave most willingly. Then he willed her to stand upon the straw; which doing, she saw the block. Then she said, “I pray you despatch me quickly.” Then she kneeled down, saying, “Will you take it off, before I lay me down?” And the hangman said, “No, madam.” Then tied she the handkerchief about her eyes, and feeling for the block, she said, “What shall I do? Where is it? Where is it?” One of the standers-by guiding her thereunto she laid her head down upon the block, and then stretched forth her body, and said, “Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit...”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to me that several of these letters contained the phrase, “Live still to die...”

<sup>19</sup> Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*. Multiple copies.

With a stroke, swift, sharp and terrible Jane's short life was ended. Like the Apostle Paul, she had fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. Henceforth there was laid up for her a crown of righteousness – a crown that none could take from her.<sup>20</sup>

## Lessons from the Lady

What do we learn from the life of Lady Jane? I can think of seven things:

1. ***The inestimable value of doctrine.*** Jane knew her Bible and what her Bible taught. She was able to withstand the intense questioning of accusers and give a solid testimony to the Lord's providence in her life even though, like Joseph, she had suffered much at the hands of her family.

How well do you know your Bible? Is it your tendency to call a pastor in trials or do you reflect on Truth? Jane had no one to turn to and such may be the case for you one day. Are you prepared to keep your membership covenant and "if called upon by my Lord, to hazard my life for the gospel's sake?"

2. ***Young does not necessitate stupid.*** There is no doubt Lady Jane Grey was uniquely gifted, yet her life demonstrates that a young teenager is capable of doing a lot more than yawning through High School and text-messaging. Your mind is a gift from God that is to be developed and used to His glory. What of you teenagers at Grace Fellowship Church? Are you studying hard, not for grades but for learning? Are you using all that energy and vigour and insight God has blessed you with to pursue Truth deeply? Don't waste your mind!

3. ***Be prepared to die for your faith.*** In her short five year reign, Bloody Mary killed 282 Protestant men, women, and children. Another 800 left the country for safety. Our lives are easy in 2008 in Canada, but things can change. Are you prepared to be killed for loving Jesus?

Many people around Jane renounced their faith at the end of their lives in either the hope that it would save their lives or save their souls. One of the most amazing things about Jane is her resoluteness even in the face of death. What of you teenager? Are you willing to die for what you believe about Jesus?

4. ***Speak the truth forcefully while submitting to your superiors willingly.*** Jane was a model of this! This was more than "the way things were back then." For a woman to speak with such clarity and force was unheard of and is indicative of her sharp mind. Thus, her careful obedience to her authorities was all the more remarkable. She knew full well their shenanigans, yet willingly followed.

5. ***Trust in the mystery of God's providence.*** The Lord speedily advanced the Reformation by putting godly Edward on the throne only to allow him to die at a young age. Then he had the equally godly Jane ascend the throne only to be quickly tossed aside. And then Mary came to the throne in an attempt to undo all the progress that had been made and hundreds were killed. And in all of this, we know that for those who loved God and were called according to His purpose, He was working together all things for good. His ways are not our ways, but we can utterly trust Him!

6. ***Delight in God.*** Jane wrote a prayer shortly before her execution:

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<sup>20</sup> Cook, 201.

“O merciful God, consider my misery, best known unto thee; and be thou now unto me a strong tower of defence, I humbly require thee. Suffer me not to be tempted above my power, but either be thou a deliverer unto me out of this great misery, or else give me grace, patiently to hear thy heavy hand and sharp correction... Give me grace, therefore, to tarry thy leisure, and patiently to bear thy works, assuredly knowing, that as thou canst, so thou wilt, deliver me, when it shall please thee, nothing doubting or mistrusting thy goodness towards me; for thou knowest better what is good for me than I do: therefore do with me in all things what thou wilt, and plague me what way thou wilt. Only, in the mean time, arm me, I beseech thee, with thy armour, that I may stand fast... that I may refer myself wholly to thy will, abiding thy pleasure, and comforting myself in those troubles that it shall please thee to send me; seeing such troubles be profitable for me, and seeing I am assuredly persuaded that it cannot be but well, all that thou doest. Hear me, O merciful Father! for his sake, whom thou wouldest should be a sacrifice for my sins: to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory. Amen.”

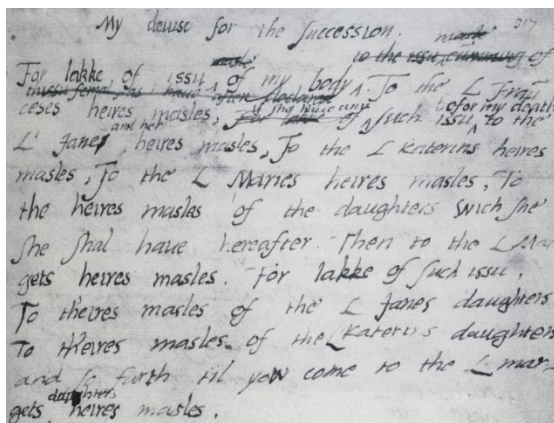
These are the words of a woman delighting in God, to His glory and for the good of all people. Could they be your words?

7. **God glorifies Himself through women as well as men!** The dignity and grace with which Jane offered up her life was a distinctly feminine. Preparing to be burnt at the stake a year later, Hugh Latimer would turn to Bishop Ridley and in a distinctly masculine way encourage, “Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” Today's *semper reformanda* needs masculine men and feminine women to glorify God in their bodies – even to the laying down of their own lives. Ladies, are you in particular, prepared to follow Jesus even unto death in ways that befit a woman of God?

*‘To mortals’ common fate thy mind resign  
My lot today, tomorrow may be thine.  
- Lady Jane (Scratched into her prison wall in Latin)*

“My Devise for the Succession.”

This is a photograph of the original handwritten by the dying King Edward.



The Execution of Lady Jane Grey (Paul Delaroche, 1833)

