




19  QUEEN ELIZABETH'S ARMADA SPEECH TO THE TROOPS AT
TILBURY, AUGUST 9, 1588¹

[Subscribed] Gathered by one that heard it and was commanded to utter it to the whole army the next day, to send it gathered to the queen herself.

My loving people, I² have been persuaded by some that are careful of my safety to take heed how I committed myself to armed multitudes, for

1. Source: BL, MS Harley 6798, art. 18, fol. 87; late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century copy written on a single 6-by-8-inch leaf. There is a printed version of the Armada Speech in *Cabala, Mysteries of State, in Letters of the Great Ministers of K. James and K. Charles* (London: for M. M. G. Bedell and T. Collins, 1654), pp. 259–60, which describes its occasion in a letter by Dr. Lionel Sharp, who had been attached to the earl of Leicester at Tilbury camp and decades later became chaplain to the duke of Buckingham: “The queen the next morning rode through all the squadrons of her army as armed Pallas attended by noble footmen, Leicester, Essex, and Norris, then lord marshal, and divers other great lords. Where she made an excellent oration to her army, which the next day after her departure, I was commanded to redeliver all the army together, to keep a public fast.” Sharp comments further of this speech, “No man hath it but myself, and such as I have given it to.” Important variants in the *Cabala* version are indicated below in the notes.

At the time of the queen’s speech, the main body of the Spanish Armada had been deflected, but no one yet knew that it would not regroup and that the chief Spanish peril was already past. The duke of Parma’s independent fleet was still expected to launch an invasion up the Thames estuary, on whose banks, across from Gravesend, the Tilbury camp was strategically placed. Although there has been much speculation about Elizabeth’s warlike garb and demeanor on this famous occasion, there can be little doubt that her speech was actually delivered, and in language reasonably close to that reproduced here.

2. I here and in the rest of the sentence, *Cabala* version uses “we” and “our.”

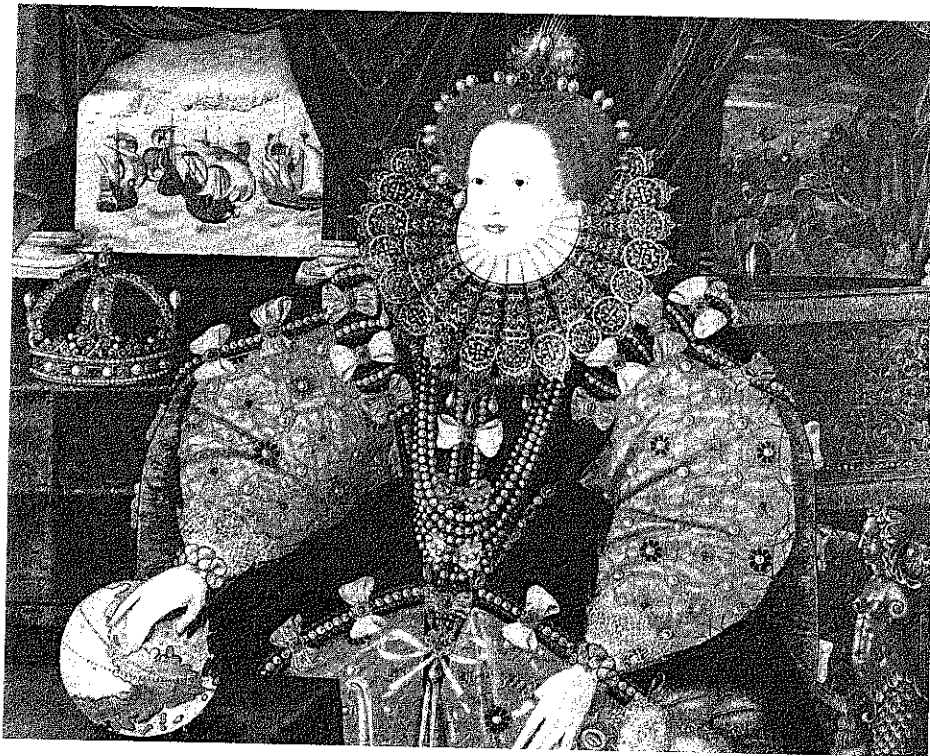


FIGURE 15 The Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth, by George Gower. Reproduced by kind permission of the Marquess of Tavistock and Trustees of the Bedford Estate.

fear of treachery. But I tell you that I would not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear: I have³ so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects. Wherefore I am come among you at this time but for my recreation and pleasure, being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live and die amongst you all,⁴ to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people mine honor and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too—and take foul scorn that Parma⁵ or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm. To the which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will venter⁶ my royal blood; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of your virtue⁷ in the field. I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them.⁸ In the meantime, my lieutenant general⁹ shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject. Not doubting but by your concord in the camp and valor in the field and your obedience to myself and my general, we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of my God and of my kingdom.¹⁰

3. *have* *Cabala* version reads "have always."

4. *Cabala* version of sentence to this point is markedly different: "And therefore I am come amongst you, as you see at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live or die amongst you all."

5. *take foul scorn that Parma* *Cabala* version reads "think foul scorn that Parma or Spain"; Alessandro Farnese, duke of Parma, was regent of the Spanish Netherlands under Philip II.

6. *venter* venture, but possibly also "vent"; *Cabala* version reads instead "take up arms."

7. *your virtue* *Cabala* version reads "every one of your virtues."

8. *I assure you . . . them* *Cabala* version of this clause is "we do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you."

9. *lieutenant general* Leicester, whose death came only shortly afterward, in September.

10. *Cabala* version of final sentence is "Not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valor in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdoms, and of my people."

20 ♪ QUEEN ELIZABETH'S LATIN SPEECH TO THE HEADS OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1592¹

Merits and gratitude have so captured my reason that they compel me to do what reason itself prohibits; for the cares of kingdoms have such great weight that they are wont rather to blunt the wit than to sharpen the memory. Let there be added besides a disuse of this language, which has been such and so constant that in thirty-six years I scarcely remember using it thirty times. But now the ice is broken: I have either to stick with it or to get off of it. Your merits are not the exceptional and notable praises (unmerited by me) that you have given me; nor declarations, narrations, and explications in many kinds of learning; nor orations of many and various kinds eruditely and notably expressed; but another thing which is much more precious and more excellent: namely, a love that has never been heard nor written nor known in the memory of man. Of this, parents lack any example; neither does it happen among familiar friends; no, nor among lovers, in whose fate faithfulness is not always included, as experience itself teaches. It is such that neither persuasions nor threats nor curses can destroy. On the contrary, time has no power over it—time that eats away iron, that wears away rocks, cannot disjoin it. Such are your merits, of such a kind that I would think them to be everlasting if I also were eternal. For which, if I had a thousand rather than one tongue, I would not be able to express due thanks, so much is the mind able to conceive that it knows not how to express.

In gratitude for which, accept thus much of prayer and advice. From the beginning of my reign, my greatest and special concern, care, and watchfulness has been that the realm be kept free as much from external enemies as from internal tumults, that it, long flourishing for many ages, might not be enfeebled under my hand. Truly, after the guardian-

1. *Source*: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 900. (For original Latin, see *ACFLO*, part 2.) Of the many extant manuscript and printed copies of Elizabeth's 1592 speech, this copy is the one most closely associated with the court: it is written in an elegant italic hand of the period and bound in a fine gilt and tooled limp vellum cover along with Queen Elizabeth's autograph English translation of Cicero's *Pro Marcello*, dating from the same era, and (on smaller sheets) Latin and English versions of "The Blessed Virgin Mary to the Messianians," a text that may be related to one of the Oxford debates or entertainments offered to the queen in 1592. This volume may have been presented as a gift to one of the Oxford heads during or after the royal visit. The italic hand recording Elizabeth's speech shows many close similarities to the secretary hand recording her 1593 speech before Parliament (Speech 21, Version 2, p. 330) in Bodleian, MS Eng. hist. C.319, and may be the work of the same copyist.

acknowledge myself guilty. Attribute it, however, to my singular affection towards you, and believe that you cannot receive harm from it which I have no share of. This writing cannot pass from my hands without imparting to you the great diligence and extreme care of this gentleman, who does not cease to plead your causes like a most faithful servant. May God send you more men like him, praying Him also to give you good instruction and to grant you the grace always to take the best path in all your enterprises, and to preserve you as the darling of His eye.

Your very assured, faithful, good sister
and cousin, *Elizabeth R*

[Postscript] For the honor of God, assemble those outlying inhabitants together. What use is it for Paris and the king to perish? O how angry I am, as this gentleman will tell you for my [part].³

83 ☞ ELIZABETH TO JAMES, JULY 6, 1590¹

[Addressed] *To my dear brother the king of Scotland*

Greater promises, more affection, and grants of more acknowledgings of received good turns, my dear brother, none can better remember than this gentleman² by your charge hath made me understand, whereby I think all my endeavors well recompensed that see them so well acknowledged, and do trust that my counsels, if they so much content you, will serve for memorials to turn your actions to serve the turn of your safe government and make the lookers-on honor your worth and reverence such a ruler. And lest fair semblance, that easily may beguile, do not breed your ignorance of such persons as either pretend religion or dissemble devotion, let me warn you that there is risen both in your realm and mine a sect of perilous consequence—such as would have no kings but a presbytery,³ and take our place while they enjoy our privi-

3. part word supplied conjecturally; it is very faded in the MS.

1. Source: BL, MS Additional 23240, art. 28, fol. 94; in Elizabeth's hand, with seals and ribbon attached. (For original-spelling version, see *ACFLO*, part 1.)

2. gentleman James's emissary to Elizabeth, Sir John Carmichael.

3. sect . . . presbytery Scotch Presbyterians, who refused to accept the monarch's headship of the Kirk, were a constant thorn in James's side during this period.

lege with a shade of God's Word, which none is judged to follow right without by their censure they be so deemed. Yea, look we well unto them. When they have made in our people's hearts a doubt of our religion and that we err if they say so, what perilous issue this may make I rather think than mind to write. *Sapienti pauca*.⁴ I pray you stop the mouths or make shorter the tongues of such ministers as dare presume to make orison in their pulpits for the persecuted in England for the Gospel.

Suppose you, my dear brother, that I can tolerate such scandals of my sincere government? No. I hope, howsoever you be pleased to bear with their audacity towards yourself, yet you will not suffer a strange king⁵ receive that indignity at such caterpillars' hand that instead of fruit I am afraid will stuff your realm with venom. Of this I have particularized more to this bearer, together with other answers to his charge, beseeching you to hear them and not to give more harbor room to vagabond traitors and seditious inventors but to return them to me or banish them your land. And thus with my many thanks for your honorable entertainments of my late embassy,⁶ I commit you to God, who ever preserve you from all evil counsel and send you grace to follow the best.

Your most assured, loving sister
and cousin, *Elizabeth R*

84 ☞ ELIZABETH TO JAMES, JANUARY 1593¹

[Addressed] *For our dear brother the king of Scotland*

[Endorsed] *Delivered by Mr. Bowes, Ambassador, 21 January, 1593*

My most dear brother,

Wonders and marvels do so assail my conceits as that the long expecting of your needful answer to matters of such weight as my late letters carried needs not seem strange, though I know they ought be more

4. "To a wise man, few words." (Cf. "A word to the wise is sufficient.")

5. strange king Elizabeth herself, who was strange (a foreigner) to the Scots.

6. Earlier in 1590, the earl of Worcester had been dispatched to Scotland to invest James with the Order of the Garter.

1. Source: BL, MS Additional 23240, art. 32, fols. 108r-109r, in Elizabeth's hand. (For original-spelling version, see *ACFLO*, part 1.)