AIDAN

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–319–4

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

	Introduction	5
1	The reign of Edwin and the mission of Paulinus	9
2	The Celtic roots of Aidan's mission	15
3	The reign of Oswald and the mission of Aidan	21
4	'Missionary trudging'	25
5	Aidan's legacy	31
6	Conclusion	39
	Further Reading	45
	Notes	47

Introduction

The year was AD 634. The monastic community on Iona was buzzing with expectation — news had reached them that Corman was returning.

Corman had left just a few months before, leading a group of missionary monks to convert the kingdom of Northumbria. Today Northumberland is the most northerly county of England, but in those days it was one of the great kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Britain, covering much of northern England and southern Scotland. At the height of its power it stretched from the River Humber to the River Forth; from Sheffield to Edinburgh.

Corman had gone at the invitation of Oswald, the new Northumbrian king. With royal sponsorship, Corman had set out with high hopes of converting a key centre of power and establishing a new monastic base. But now Corman was returning and his return was unexpected.

King Oswald knew the community at Iona well; a few years before he had arrived as a vulnerable teenager. Oswald's father had died in battle and so, at the age of 13 and accompanied by his six brothers, Oswald had sought refuge among the Irish aristocracy. One of the places where he had stayed had been the monastic community of Iona, then part of the Irish kingdom of Dál Riata. During his stay, Oswald had converted to Christianity and been baptised, and so one of the first things he had done on

coming to the throne was to make a request to Abbot Ségéne, asking him to send a bishop from Iona with missionaries to convert his kingdom.

But when Corman arrived back into the fold of Iona he was a bitter man. His mission had ended in failure. The English were 'intractable, obstinate, and uncivilized,' he explained.[1] They had rejected the message of Christ and it seemed nothing could be done for them. He had tried to convert them, but now he was, at it were, wiping the dust of English soil from his feet. Perhaps meeting soldiers in Oswald's court who had personally killed monks had shaped Corman's attitude, or perhaps it was the fact that Oswald's father was known as 'Twister' by the Celts because of his double dealing. The excitement of Corman's return soon dissolved into feelings of frustration. The high hopes of his departure had transformed into disappointment.

A long discussion followed as the monks debated what should be done next. Finally, a younger monk spoke up. Perhaps what was needed, he suggested, was a gentler approach:

> It seems to me, brother, that you have been unreasonably harsh upon your ignorant hearers: you did not first offer them the milk of simpler teaching, as the apostle recommends [in Hebrews 5:12–14], until little by little, as they grew strong on the food of God's word, they were capable of receiving more elaborate instructions and of carrying out the more transcendent commandments of God.

The tension this intervention created must have been palpable. One of the earliest accounts tells us that 'all eyes were turned' towards the young monk. Corman was a senior monk and here he was being publicly criticised. But before the gathering could become fractious, Abbot Ségéne intervened. His solution was simple. Perhaps another approach might work. A new delegation

would travel from Iona to Northumbria with a new leader — the young monk who had suggested a different strategy. The man's name was Áedán. At least, that is what the monks would have called him, but today he is more often known by the Anglicised form of his name, Aidan.

JOHN WYCLIFFE

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–320–0

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

	Introduction	5
1	Academic star	7
2	Political hero	13
3	Religious ‘heretic’	21
4	Bible man	27
5	Poor preachers	33
6	Enduring legacy	39
	Further Reading	45
	Notes	47

Introduction

> Organ of the Devil, enemy of the Church, confusion of the common people, idol of heretics, mirror of hypocrites, instigator of schism, sower of hatred, inventor of lies.[1]

> This is beyond doubt, that when all the world was in a most desperate and vile state and the lamentable ignorance and darkness of God's truth had overshadowed the whole earth, this man stepped forth like a valiant champion, to whom it may justly be applied what is spoken in the book of Ecclesiasticus of Simon son of Onias: Even as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon when it is full, and as the bright beams of the sun, so does he shine and glister [sparkle] in the temple and church of God.[2]

These are two verdicts on fourteenth-century priest John Wycliffe. The first is from the chronicler Thomas Walsingham in his *Historia Anglicana*, and comes from the century after Wycliffe's death, when he was regarded as a heretic. The second comes a hundred or so years after that from John Foxe, the great sixteenth-century historian of the English Reformation. By then, Wycliffe was being rehabilitated as a forerunner of the Protestant rediscovery of justification by faith, which paved the way for evangelical Christianity today.

LADY JANE GREY

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, England, PR25 2DY

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–321–7

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

Introduction 5

1 Dynasties and doctrine 7

2 A true mother and a godly king 13

3 Lady Jane is sold and the king's dog is shot 17

4 Fair allurements to learning 21

5 A dangerous device 27

6 'The crown pleaseth me not' 29

7 'May I not go home?' 33

8 Heaven is thy gain 39

Further Reading 45

Notes 47

Introduction

Lady Jane Grey was martyred on 12 February 1554. She was sixteen years old, and on the night before her death she sent her sister one of her few remaining possessions, her Greek New Testament. She began the accompanying letter: 'I have here sent you, good sister Katherine, a book, which although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet inwardly it is more worth than precious stones.' She describes the Bible as Christ's last will and testament 'which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy.' It offers, she says, a greater inheritance than all their father's lands. 'It will teach you to live, and learn you to die.'

Jane is often portrayed as a hapless pawn in the schemes of others, and there is much truth in this—she was the victim of other people's ambition. But she could also be strong-willed and resolute. She was, after all, a Tudor with the red-hair of the Tudor dynasty, as well as a young woman with strong convictions and deep personal piety. In the end she was willing to die for her faith.

She picks up the theme of learning to die again in the letter to Catherine:

> Live still to die, that you, by death, may purchase eternal life, or after your death enjoy the life purchased you by Christ's death … labour always to learn to die. Deny the world, defy the devil, and despise the flesh, and delight yourself only in the

> Lord. Be penitent for your sins, and yet despair not; be strong in faith, and yet presume not; and desire with St Paul to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, with whom, even in death, there is life … As near as you can, follow the steps of your Master, Christ, and take up your cross, lay your sins on his back, and always embrace him.

Finally she invites her sister to rejoice with her. ‘For I am assured, that I shall, for losing of a mortal life, find an immortal felicity.’

MARY JONES

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–322–4

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

Introduction 5

1 The impact of revival 7

2 A passion for God's Word 19

3 The founding of the Bible Society 29

4 The way to glory 35

Further Reading 41

Places to Visit 43

Notes 45

Introduction

In 1800, a visitor called at the home of Thomas Charles in Bala in North Wales. Charles was an important preacher in the local area, a graduate of Oxford University, a man of independent means. His house was on the main street in the centre of the town. Today it is the home of a bank. Before him stood a fifteen-year-old girl, the daughter of a poor weaver. It was a bold move for her to call at his house.

If Thomas Charles found her presence on his doorstep surprising, he had more surprises in store. The young girl asked if she could purchase a Bible. Charles had petitioned the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge to print more copies of the Bible in Welsh, the language most people spoke in North Wales, and Charles had recently received fresh supplies. Sadly, though, the only copies remaining were promised to other people. He had no Bibles left.

The girl before him burst into tears. Between her sobs, he discovered she had walked about twenty-eight miles on foot to see him. Not only that, but she had been saving for six years to buy herself a Bible. Charles was so moved by her story that he gave her one of the Bibles he had set aside — someone else would have to wait a little longer for their copy.

The name of the girl was Mari or, as she is known more often known today, Mary Jones. Her story is the story of spiritual

revival, of evangelical activism, of the founding of the Bible Society, but above all it is the story of one girl's passion to read God's Word for herself.

THOMAS CRANMER

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–323–1

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

Introduction 5

1 Two marriages 9

2 The unwilling Archbishop 13

3 The see-saw Reformation 17

4 Crowning the new King Josiah 23

5 Facing the fury of Mary 27

6 Who was Thomas Cranmer? 31

7 The renewal of love 35

8 The renewal of love in the worship of the church 41

Further Reading 47

Notes 48

Introduction

On 2 August 1529 the Cressy family had three guests in their house in Waltham, Essex. One was an undistinguished academic, Thomas Cranmer, who was tutoring their sons while plague hit Cambridge. The other two were unexpected: Stephen Gardiner and Edward Fox, the king's Secretary and Almoner (the person in charge of his charity to the poor). The king was staying at Waltham Abbey as he made his summer progress, a tour through his kingdom, and members of the court were billeted in local houses. What Cranmer thought as he went to bed that night we do not know, but it is unlikely he thought anything significant had transpired. Yet that apparently chance encounter turned his life upside down, and not just *his* life, but the life of the English church. It set in train a sequence of events that led ultimately to Cranmer's martyrdom and the renewal of Christianity in England.

There was only one thing on the mind of King Henry VIII at the time—how could he divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry the new love of his life, Anne Boleyn? Catherine had first been married to Henry's brother, but he had died of tuberculosis soon after the marriage. Not one to waste a potential political allegiance, Henry VII had passed Catherine on to his second son, the twelve-year-old Henry. The engagement was controversial from the start. Catherine claimed her first marriage had never been consummated, but Henry VII thought it might be best to get a papal dispensation for 'affinity' to cover all possibilities. Henry Junior had his doubts, but when Henry VII died he decided he would

press ahead with the plan. In June 1509 Henry and Catherine were married, and twelve days later they were crowned king and queen of England at Westminster Abbey.

Twenty years on everything had soured. Catherine had given Henry a daughter, Mary, but she had failed to produce the male heir he craved and now she was approaching forty. Female succession was technically possible, but it had never happened before and a marriage to a foreign prince could see England fall into foreign hands. Henry became obsessed with the idea that his original marriage was ungodly because he had married his brother's wife. Leviticus 20:21 says: 'If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonoured his brother. They will be childless.' The verse probably refers to a living brother who has divorced his wife, but that is not how Henry saw it. He believed this curse had fallen on him. The matter became urgent when Henry fell head over heels in love with Anne Boleyn. Anne had recently arrived from the French court where she seems to have been exposed to the teachings of the Reformation — the authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone.

To divorce Catherine, Henry needed an annulment from the Pope. The problem was the Pope needed the political support of Emperor Charles V, and Charles was Catherine's nephew. So the Pope prevaricated endlessly.

In the Cressy home in August 1529 the dinner conversation inevitably turned to the 'Great Matter', as the king's divorce was known. The Pope had just adjourned a hearing in London that Henry had hoped would grant his divorce; instead the Pope had decided the case must be heard in Rome. Henry was back to square one. Over the meal Cranmer wondered whether taking the matter to the church courts was the best approach. He suggested an alternative way forward: asking the theologians of Europe for their opinions. Perhaps the king should bypass the entanglements of the courts by making it a matter of theology rather than canon law.

Two months later Cranmer stood before the king. The king was looking for fresh ideas and he had heard about Cranmer's suggestion. Cranmer was just the kind of man the king was looking for, so the king commissioned him to write a book exploring the issue with complete impartiality. He then arranged for Cranmer to stay in the house of Anne Boleyn's father while he conducted this 'impartial' examination! In the red corner, as it were, was Leviticus 20:21 with its warning of childlessness to anyone who marries their brother's wife. But in the blue corner was Deuteronomy 25:5, apparently legitimising the original marriage: 'If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfil the duty of a brother-in-law to her.' Unsurprisingly, Cranmer argued the case for divorce, preferring Leviticus over Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, he argued, belonged to the ceremonial law that applied only to Jews. Two months later his book was finished and submitted to the theologians of Cambridge University to assist their deliberations on the matter. Meanwhile, Cranmer was on his way to Rome in the service of the king.

Just four years later Thomas Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury. He would go on to be the most significant holder of that office, radically transforming the church in England.

WILLIAM TYNDALE

by

Tim Chester

Evangelical Press (EP Books), an imprint of 10Publishing

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

www.epbooks.org

epbooks@10ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2021 by Tim Chester

First published in Great Britain in 2021

The right of Tim Chester to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–78397–324–8

Cover Design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Typeset by Quinta Press

Contents

	Introduction	5
1	The ploughboy shall know the Scripture	9
2	So blind, so bedlam mad	15
3	The rudeness of the word	19
4	The fires of hate	23
5	The hogs of hell	29
6	Your cause is Christ's gospel	33
7	Open the king's eyes	35
8	Conclusion	41
	Further Reading	45
	Notes	47

Introduction

In April 1531 King Henry VIII received a letter from Stephen Vaughan, his agent in Antwerp.[1] A messenger had visited Vaughan with a strange request. He had asked Vaughan to go with him to meet a 'friend'. Vaughan was intrigued. 'What is your friend, and where is he?' he asked. 'His name I know not,' said the messenger. 'But if it be your pleasure to go where he is, I will be glad thither to bring you.' None of this made sense to Vaughan — a secret meeting at a secret location. Nevertheless he agreed to accompany the messenger.

They made their way through the narrow streets of Antwerp and out beyond the city wall. There in a field was the mysterious friend. 'Do you not know me?' the stranger asked. Vaughan was a diplomat and too polite to say no, though in truth they had never met. Instead he replied, 'I do not well remember you.' The stranger said, 'My name is Tyndale.'

William Tyndale was the most wanted man in Europe. Back in London his translation of the New Testament was being publicly burned. People found with a copy were tortured. Vaughan had been looking for Tyndale for months and now Tyndale had found him.

Tyndale's latest book, *The Practice of Prelates*, had enraged the king because it argued against the divorce which King Henry VIII craved — he wanted to be free from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, so he could marry Anne Boleyn. He feared his first marriage was cursed because he had married his brother's widow

and he also longed for a male heir. That was before he became infatuated with Anne! Posters denouncing the book had been put up around London. A number of merchants found with copies, including Tyndale's brother, John, had been paraded through the streets with the book slung around their necks, but demand for Tyndale's books only increased.

So the king changed tactics. Behind this, as was so often the case, was Thomas Cromwell, the king's right-hand man. Cromwell was sympathetic to the Reformation, though he was always careful how he played his hand. It was Cromwell who, on behalf of the king, had approached Vaughan. Although *The Practice of Prelates* opposed the royal divorce, its main theme was an attack on the power and corruption of the church's hierarchy. With the possibility that Tyndale could be persuaded to make common cause with the king, Cromwell had asked Vaughan to arrange a meeting to persuade Tyndale to return from exile.

At the meeting, Tyndale was tactful, carefully avoiding any direct accusation against Henry. Instead, he reiterated his concern that Henry was the victim of church scheming. Just a few months before, Henry had charged Cardinal Wolsey, his long-standing chief advisor, with treason. Tyndale cited this as proof of his case in *The Practice of Prelates*. It was church power that was the real danger to the realm, not the translation of the Bible into English. Yet, though Vaughan did his best to persuade him, Tyndale refused to return. He feared the clergy would persuade Henry to revoke any promise of safe conduct.

As night fell, the two men parted and Vaughan headed back into the city. Tyndale headed in the opposite direction before turning back and entering the city by another route. When the king read Vaughan's letter reporting the meeting, he was furious. Cromwell again wrote to Vaughan, describing how the king had railed against Tyndale's heresies, and Cromwell added a note of his own, urging

Vaughan to continue persuading Tyndale as 'the king's royal majesty is so inclined to mercy, pity, and compassion.'

A month later Vaughan wrote again. He had met Tyndale a second time. Cromwell's postscript had moved Tyndale to tears, he wrote, and Tyndale had said:

> What gracious words are these! I assure you, if it would stand with the king's most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text of the scripture [i.e. without Tyndale's controversial notes] to be put forth among his people, like as is put forth among the subjects of the emperor in these parts, and of other Christians princes, be it of the translation of what person soever shall please his majesty, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more, not abide two days in these parts after the same: but immediately to repair unto his realm, and there most humbly submit myself at the feet of his royal majesty, offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yea, what death his grace will, so this be obtained. And till that time, I will abide the asperity [roughness] of all chances, whatsoever shall come, and endure my life in as many pains as it is able to bear and suffer.[2]

Tyndale wasn't interested in fame: he was willing for another translation by another translator to be permitted. He wasn't interested in comfort: he was willing to endure the deprivations of exile. He was even prepared to be tortured and martyred; his passion was to enable the people of England to read the Bible in their own language.

Vaughan met Tyndale one more time. Tyndale repeated his offer: he would return to England if the king allowed an English Bible. Vaughan wrote two more letters to Cromwell, warmly commending Tyndale. But this time he received no reply. Instead another agent was sent from the king, Sir Thomas Elyot, and his instructions were not to persuade Tyndale, but to kidnap him.