

SEVEN LEADERS

Preachers and Pastors

Iain H. Murray



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

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Front: A view over Lake Bala, Wales

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Rear: An aerial photograph of Grace Community
Church, Roscoe Blvd, Sun Valley, CA

Introduction

THESE pages originated in an invitation to speak on 'Preachers and Pastors' to students for the ministry at the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne in March 2014. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7 come from addresses given on that occasion. At the request of the students, one of my subjects is a leader who continues in his ministry at the present time. Chapter 2 was originally an address given at the Crieff Fellowship in Scotland in 2009. Chapter 1 on John Elias, I wrote for these pages, regarding him as too important to leave out. Edward Morgan's *Memoir of John Elias* was a biography which meant a great deal to me over sixty years ago. Although Elias died in 1841, his life retains a message immensely relevant to the church today.

By the early part of the last century, the 'pipelines' which carried knowledge of spiritual history were fractured by those who wanted the churches taken in a new direction. Few played an equal part in restoring knowledge of what had been lost than William 'Jim' Grier. Without his guidance many of us would have been the poorer, and thankfulness for what he was enabled to do prompted the chapter under his name.

Of three of the seven men, Archibald Brown, D. M. Lloyd-Jones, and John MacArthur, I have already written biographies. To give some new material and comment on them, and to help bring them closer to the younger generation, they are included here. While Lloyd-Jones and W. J. Grier were the only two among the seven who met one another, I have been repeatedly struck by the spiritual similarities they all shared, despite the differences of time and place. That ought not to

be surprising for it is the same head of the church who prepares those whom he sends. Even so, faithful men are not the same in their gifts, opportunities and circumstances. For each Christ has a distinct calling, as he cautioned Simon Peter, 'If I want him to remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me!' (John 21:22). God does not make replicas. We are to learn from leaders yet be imitators of none.

I am a believer in giving dates. They are important to an understanding of history and their study will often throw light on the providence of God.

While my hope is that this book will assist younger men called to the ministry of the gospel, it is not meant for them alone. All Christians ought to be able to pass on what 'we have heard and known and our fathers have told us' (Psa. 78:3). When history is forgotten, it is later generations who suffer. The past is rich with wisdom which will never be out of date. When the lonely island of St Kilda once appealed for 'a good minister' be sent to them, they were asked, 'What kind of minister would you have to be sent?' The reply was, 'One that will tell us of our danger and preach Christ to us.'

Preachers and pastors do not arise apart from churches, and their usefulness is in large measure related to their people's prayerful understanding and support. No one preaches in a vacuum. The usefulness of a church is bound up with the inter-dependence of pastors and people.

When John Angell James (1785-1859) was near the end of his much-used ministry he expressed thoughts which must resonate with all who approach the conclusion of their service:

Standing, as I now do, in the prospect of the close of my ministry, of the eternal world, and of my summons to the presence of the great Lord of all, the salvation of souls, as the object of the ministry, appears to me, more than ever before, in all its awful sublimity. Everything else, as compared with this, seems but as the small dust of the balance. To my younger brethren I say, You are engaged in the greatest work in the universe.

Introduction

Numbers of my generation owe a great debt to the Evangelical Library in London, an institution which has inspired many by calling attention to the riches of the past. At the annual meeting of the library, in November 1961, Dr Lloyd-Jones closed the proceedings with the words:

O Lord, we thank Thee for the ministry of those long since gone to their reward and who are with thee. We thank Thee that they are still speaking. We pray Thee that Thou wouldst speak to us more and more through them that they may enable us to speak. We thank Thee for all whom Thou hast raised up in past centuries to speak Thy word with holy boldness, without fear or favour. Lord, make us fit to follow in their train. Make us worthy, O God, of the heritage they have sent down to us. Teach us, O Lord, to prize the things that we have, and all that Thou hast made possible to us through them.¹

I am thankful to Peter Hastie, Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College at Melbourne, for the invitation that prompted this book. Other friends, for whose help I am indebted, include, John Aaron, Ernest Brown, John Grier, and Phil Johnson. As ever, the work of my colleagues in the Banner of Truth Trust has gone into this book at every stage and is much appreciated. None of the seven leaders recorded here would have been what they were without their wives. The presence of the latter is the great unseen story of Christian ministry. A book is needed on the work of a preacher's wife. But it is known to heaven and known to every one of us who has been, and is, so blessed. To God be the praise!

Iain H. Murray

Edinburgh, January 4, 2017

¹ There is an important insight into the ministry of Dr Lloyd-Jones which cannot be set down on paper. For those who were never present at Westminster Chapel in the time of his ministry, something valuable can now be learned about the congregational worship from the website which has recovered hymn singing from that period. See <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA75QZVSIVQJdyG7Kua8w-bR9nLyGoe6c>

A Time Chart

