

FOREWORD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Conrad Mbewe (pronounced *em-bay-way*) has sometimes been called “the Spurgeon of Africa.” His work in Zambia to plant a reformed baptist church (Kabwata Baptist Church), to help start other churches, to help form an Association, and to help start a ministerial training school is an inspirational story. However, this book is much more than a window into the ministry of Conrad Mbewe. He would shun such attention or adulation. Rather, it is a theological narration of the growth of Christ’s reformed baptist churches in Zambia into a strong and vibrant ministry in the nation. This collection of messages and writings, delivered over a period of twenty-five years for real-life settings, narrates the joys and sorrows of building reformed baptist churches in any nation and culture. The biblical issues which he has sought to wrestle with and to apply to his Zambian people are the same encountered in building a biblical and reformed baptist church in Europe and America. We have much to learn from this dear brother’s ministry to his beloved nation and people as he seeks to apply the trans-cultural truths of Christ’s church to his situation...and to ours. Thus, the title: *Foundations for the Flock: Truths about the Church for All the Saints*.

Pastor Mbewe has been called “the Spurgeon of Africa” by some, but I prefer to call him “the Lloyd-Jones of Africa.” I remember when I first heard him preach long ago at the Reformed Baptist Missions Services meeting in Lafayette, New Jersey. I knew nothing about him beforehand. It was an exposition of the Lord’s Prayer. His exposition was so clear, his language so simple and well-reasoned,

his grasp of the whole message of Scripture so Christ-centered, and his applications so humble and persuasive, that I thought: “Martyn Lloyd-Jones!” His writings yield the same profound simplicity so that one is struck by the sufficiency of God’s Word to guide us. Again, he would be humbly horrified to be compared to such a useful servant of Christ. But that is one man’s opinion!

THE NEED FOR THIS BOOK

The need of this book for today’s scene is critical. In the past fifty years, the world and, especially, the United States has seen a revival of Calvinism which many of us never thought we would see in our lifetime. Hundreds of students are graduating from our baptist seminaries each year with a commitment to “the Doctrines of Grace.” We thank God for this restoration of truth. Some are going into established churches seeking to bring reformation and revival. Others are seeking to start new churches with a firm foundation in the reformed faith.

However, many times these younger pastors encounter opposition to their message of gospel repentance and faith, a holy life, and the sovereignty of God in His grace. Some have pushed good things too quickly, lacking the sanctified patience to win the biblical conviction of leaders and people. Ernest Reisinger used to warn me: “a man convinced against his will is a man convinced against you still.” Wise words for young and old pastors. Others have pushed lesser priorities to the forefront, receiving opposition to unfamiliar changes. For instance, is it wise to push elder government as a controversial priority when the people need first lengthy instruction to understand justification and sanctification? Must they not have a heart for biblical eldership before we implement it? Must not the candidates be mature in the faith before we appoint them? Still others have tried to imitate a well-respected pastor or to make their church a copy of his, neglecting the truth that God’s Word and Spirit work uniquely in each man and in each church...and in God’s time, not ours. This book, tempered

by an older pastor's wisdom and experience, has much to offer younger pastors who may not know what they do not know.

Every reformation and revival progresses unevenly. This was true of the Reformation and of the First and Second Great Awakenings. Some leaders are mature and sound, others are extremists and ignorant. All make mistakes. Yet Christ has promised to build His church successfully against the gates of hell with earthen vessels who carry a heavenly treasure. We must not despair at the difficulty, opposition, and well-meaning mistakes encountered in reformation and revival. However, on the other hand, pastors and churches need books like this one to instruct their unknown ignorance and to sanctify their well-meaning zeal in order to build biblical and reformed baptist churches. I thank our brother, Conrad Mbewe, for providing such a useful work on building local churches to God's glory.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THIS BOOK

This book has a history to it. The chapters come from messages and pamphlets which Pastor Mbewe composed over twenty years of ministry. They have been gathered together for publication by Chad Thompson, the editor. As Conrad sought to lead Kabwata Baptist Church into a more biblical and reformed church, he sometimes encountered serious opposition. His chapters on "Your Baptismal Class Notes" and "Biblical Church Government" were created to teach his people well and to bring biblical principles into the church life. His sections on church officers and church discipline were written in the fires of need to guard his own heart as a pastor and to deal gently and honestly with his people. He intersperses his instruction with personal joys, sorrows, and even mistakes as a pastor. No ivory-tower theoretician here! This historical background to each chapter and section greatly adds to the value of the book for pastoral edification and for the instruction of aspiring ministers of the gospel.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

As one reads Pastor Mbewe's chapters, one finds that the things he had to teach and apply in his Zambian church culture are the exact same things pastors in Europe and America must deal with in their own church culture. There is a reason for this. In spite of different backgrounds, people are really the same everywhere. They are fallen children of Adam who need redemption from sin and instruction in the trans-cultural righteousness of God. They all have family issues, moral issues, exposure to heresy and error, sanctification issues, etc. Unique quirks may characterize different cultures, but God is the same, people are the same, and the church must follow the same biblical paths in every culture.

I found Pastor Mbewe's chapter on "Church and State" to be an excellent biblical presentation of the relationship of the individual Christian and the local church to the state, respectively. In the United States, there is great confusion about this. Church members sometimes are pressured by one another to join a "Christian" political movement or else be considered compromised. Churches are often recruited to join in political protests or Christian political activities. Well-meaning pastors may be distracted from biblical priorities by political involvement. Local church controversies and divisions sometimes arise from a lack of biblical instruction about such things. What is the teaching of Scripture on these issues? Pastor Mbewe provides a well-reasoned biblical answer, worthy to be read by all pastors of all cultures.

Another chapter of special interest is his lengthy instruction about Associations. Many reformed pastors and churches have little interest in Associations of churches. Rugged individualism is often necessary to hold fast the truth against opposition, creating a self-contained attitude in the local church. However, Pastor Mbewe examines biblical evidence for Associational involvement with sister churches and clarifies the boundaries between local church priority and cooperative efforts with other like-minded churches. Along the way, he outlines the burden of Christ for Christian unity between His people and His churches. In a day of reformation, the

temptation to become isolated and eccentric in a local church must be tempered by the biblical call to broader fellowship and cooperation between like-minded churches. Conrad provides both biblical examination and practical application for this issue.

The chapter on “Challenges in the Pastoral Ministry Today” is a veritable pastoral theology which younger men need so desperately. Even a good seminary training may be deficient for forming the minds of aspiring pastors into a biblical worldview for the pastoral ministry. There is much in this chapter for young and old which can be a “touchstone” to read periodically for instruction and re-examination of one’s attitude and practice. I thank Pastor Mbewe for challenging me in this section.

Another chapter of special interest would be his chapter on “Worship in Spirit and Truth.” Overall, it was a wonderful chapter, using the Ten Commandments to explain “the regulative principle of worship.” This biblical principle, and thinking through its applications, often is absent from seminary preparation. This has led to confusion among baptists about what is God-approved worship practice. Pastor Mbewe’s historical narration about his messages on biblical worship to his congregation brings pastoral wisdom much needed today. His discussion of the “form and circumstances of worship” is a needed distinction between the biblically commanded elements of worship and the identity of freedom in the circumstances of worship. These circumstances of worship are outlined in the Second London Confession, Chapter 1, paragraph 6, statement: “common to human actions and societies.” These circumstances of any human meeting (time, hymnal vs. overhead, pews vs. chairs, order of the meeting, etc.) may vary in different churches but must not add uncommanded elements to commanded elements of worship (i.e., Scripture reading and exposition, singing, prayer, and the ordinances). Further, the *adiaphora* (indifferent things) of worship must take into account both the freeness and self-denial of Christian liberty in bringing change into each local church’s background and culture of worship. In America, at least, the preferences of the older mature believers often have been sacrificed

on the altar of pleasing the immature younger ones, especially in the music of worship. Pastor Mbewe shows the kind of thoughtful wrestling with the regulative principle of worship that is so much needed in pastoral preparation today.

The final section of this book presents a theology of missions for the local church. In addition, Pastor Mbewe includes the missions policy and by-laws of Kabwata Baptist Church. This section could be a practical help to churches in how to reform their missions approach. It encourages the local church to become directly involved in taking the gospel into all the world. It also recognizes the realistic trials of mission work and emphasizes the strain of relationships involved in such work. He offers wise and gracious counsel about how to develop and keep a unified spirit in missions.

FINAL COMMENDATION

I reiterate that Pastor Mbewe's book would be of great benefit to pastors and students in the pastoral ministry. I would use it as one of my texts in a course on reformed baptist ecclesiology or the pastoral ministry. Always trying to be biblical, striving to be simple, this work is deceptively profound and practical. Self-consciously, he has not tried to define and evaluate every position and difference on the topics. He wants to expound positively his understanding of God's Word on the church and to apply it as best he can to his church and other churches. I believe he has accomplished this well. In so doing, he also trains the reader how to think biblically for himself in pastoral work.

It would be wrong not to mention that I disagreed with Pastor Mbewe in a few places, such as on the possibility of women deacons. Yet he was not critical of those who hold a different view. Historically, reformed baptists have held to divergent views on this subject while still encouraging the ministry of women in the life of the church. It is a small difference in light of the whole book!

I cannot finish this commendation of Pastor Mbewe's fine work without illustrating his heart for the church: the glory of God and

His dear Son. The overriding spirit of our dear brother is illustrated in this quote in his section on the work of pastors:

Before I close, let me draw your attention to just one more aspect of our entire ministry that is so obvious in the Pastoral Epistles that we could easily miss it. It is its Christ-centredness. From the way in which Paul deals with literally every subject, you cannot miss the fragrance of Christ. Every page of his writings is Christ, Christ, Christ. If Timothy and Titus were to emulate what they knew about Paul's teaching, his way of life, his purpose, his faith, etc. (2 Timothy 3:10), then we must do the same. I am pleading, in closing, for a Christ-centred ministry. Let us love the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, that we might decrease and he might increase. Spirit of the living God, help us to lift Jesus high in our day and age! O brethren, speak less about yourselves and more about Christ. Point souls to Christ in everything you do. Never be content with anything short of a people that walk with, worship, love, serve and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Be Christ-centred in your ministry!

Need I say more about the spirit of this book on the church? I thank our dear Lord for bringing this dear brother, Conrad Mbewe, out of darkness into His marvelous light. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has found a valiant defender!

– DR. FRED A. MALONE
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