

First Timothy No. 1

1 Timothy 1:1-7

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The Rev. Dr. Robert S. Rayburn

From Colossians and Philemon we move to the Pastoral Epistles, or at least to First and Second Timothy. They come next in the chronology of Paul's life and writings and they happen to be the only two books of the New Testament that I have never preached through.

Some of you are aware that questions have been raised about the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles. Some modern scholars have doubted whether First and Second Timothy and Titus were really written by Paul. I won't waste your time reviewing that debate. If you read the arguments against Pauline authorship and then their rebuttal, I'm quite sure you would think as I do that it is only the mind determined to find problems that will not find the authentic Paul in these letters. They claim to have been written by Paul, the early church, and very early, took them to be the productions of the great Apostle, and, as bishop Handley Moule, once said of 2 Timothy: "The *human heart* is in it everywhere. And fabricators, certainly of that age, did not well understand the *human heart*." [Stott, *Guard the Gospel*, 14] We are reading the authentic Paul near the end of his life. In First Timothy not so near the end as when Paul wrote 2 Timothy, but later than his Roman imprisonment in the early 60s of the first century, during which imprisonment he had written Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

As you know, we know of Timothy from the narrative of Paul's missionary travels in the book of Acts and from a variety of references to him in the letters of the Apostle Paul. But I wonder if you know how significant a figure Timothy was in apostolic Christianity. He is one of the great men of the earliest church. Paul apparently met Timothy on his first missionary journey which included a visit to the city of Lystra in what is now central Turkey. Lystra was Timothy's hometown. Timothy's mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek, so we read in Acts 16:1. It appears that the mother was or became a Christian believer but the father was not. Perhaps she and her son were converts of Paul's evangelistic ministry, though a remark in 2 Timothy 1:5 suggests that even before she became explicitly a Christian Timothy's mother was a believing woman as was his grandmother. There *were* believing Jews, after all, who only need to be told of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus to become believers *in him*. By the time Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, Timothy was already highly regarded, not only by the believers in Lystra but by those in the nearby city of Iconium. He must have given himself to some Christian ministry and to have performed acceptably, if not admirably. He was, apparently, as they used to say, a young man of parts.

So much did Timothy impress Paul on that second meeting that, virtually on the spot, he added him to his traveling entourage and from that moment Timothy's life was inextricably bound to

that of the great apostle to the Gentiles. Paul may have received divine instruction to add Timothy to the apostolic staff, as 1 Tim. 1:18 and 4:14 seem to suggest. In that case, Timothy received his ministry as Paul had received his: by the direct calling of God. That fact may account for the number of times his name surfaces in the New Testament. God had placed his hand very publicly on this young man.

You may remember that Paul had Timothy circumcised because his mother was Jewish and by circumcising Timothy he could mollify the Jewish element in the church without surrendering anything to the party that was demanding that Gentile Christians be circumcised in order to be saved. As Paul explained in his letter to the Galatians, that was a demand that only someone with a seriously mistaken view of the gospel would make. Paul was always doing his best, bending over backward, to avoid needless conflict and, at the very beginning of his association with Paul's ministry, Timothy would have been thoroughly indoctrinated into that same irenic spirit, his own circumcision being a means of keeping the peace. He must have learned that lesson well, because Paul trusted him on a number of subsequent occasions to calm troubled waters in several of Paul's churches.

On that second journey Paul, if you remember, left Timothy with Silas in Berea to establish the fledgling church as he went on to Athens. Timothy was apparently an effective teacher. He was eventually part of Paul's team in Corinth where the apostle remained for a year and a half. It was probably from Corinth that the two letters to the Thessalonians were written and Paul includes Timothy as a co-author of those letters. For all we know he may have served as Paul's secretary in the production of some of the letters that now belong to the New Testament. At some point during his time in Corinth Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica further to establish the new Christians there (1 Thess. 3:1-3). Timothy was still part of Paul's team during the more than two years the apostle spent in Ephesus on his third missionary journey. During that time he was sent as Paul's emissary to Corinth to deal with a variety of problems that had surfaced in that important church and which are addressed in the letters we know as First and Second Corinthians. He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem at the end of that third journey and, so far as we know, had stayed by Paul through most, if not all of the two years he spent in prison in Caesarea, because the next we hear of him he is with Paul, now under house arrest in Rome. Presumably Timothy was on the ship that foundered off Malta. Because he was Paul's assistant, he lived an eventful life!

Timothy is mentioned by name in three of the four letters that Paul wrote while he was in Rome under house arrest (Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). Paul was released from that imprisonment, relatively mild as it was, and continued his ministry among churches he had already established to the east of Rome and, apparently, westward as far as Spain. After visiting the church in Ephesus at some point, he left Timothy there to deal with some false teaching and to ensure that the church was provided with effective leadership, the kind of leadership Paul

could count on to maintain the church's faithfulness to the apostolic teaching. *It was at this point that First Timothy was written: when Timothy was still in Ephesus but after Paul had moved on..* Where Paul was when he wrote this letter no one knows.

Take all of this together and it means this: so far as we know, there was no one closer to Paul or more intimately involved with his ministry or for a longer time than Timothy and no one Paul relied on more than Timothy. Indeed, in speaking about Timothy to the Philippians Paul says both "I have no one like him" and "Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." [Phil. 2:19-24] We also hear of Timothy at the end of Hebrews where we read that he had recently been released from prison. [13:23] We know nothing about that imprisonment, but are reminded that Timothy suffered the same sort of trials that Paul had suffered and remained faithful and useful through them all. You might not have realized this, but Timothy *was one of the most ubiquitous and important and influential figures of apostolic Christianity.*

All of this suggests that the young man was so capable and so godly a man that Paul felt free to leave important matters in his hands. If you remember, on that second missionary journey hostile Jews had followed Paul from Thessalonica to Berea to stir up trouble for him there. That Paul felt comfortable leaving Timothy in a hostile situation is some evidence both of Timothy's gifts and his courage as well of the confidence that Paul already had in the young man. That he was the one Paul sent to the troubled church in Corinth suggests that he trusted Timothy to handle himself well in difficult circumstances. Timothy is sometimes represented in Christian preaching as a particularly timid young man who was always needing bucking up. There are some statements in these two letters that Paul wrote to him that might suggest that Timothy was given to fear, though they don't by any means necessarily *prove* that that was the case. In fact I wonder if that impression is accurate, because there is certainly plenty of evidence to the contrary.

What makes the Pastoral Epistles unique is that they were written to individuals about issues concerning the life and health of the church. They provide a fascinating glimpse into early church life, but, what is more important, an equally fascinating demonstration that very little has changed from that day to this.

They are also interesting in being the last of Paul's letters and some of the later writings of the New Testament. So they reflect the situation in the mid-60s of the first century, only some 35 years or so after Pentecost but right before the death of Peter and Paul. It is remarkable, for example, that there is nothing about the miraculous in any of these three letters: for example, there is no reference to speaking in tongues or prophecies in church services such as we find in First Corinthians. It is possible, of course, that Paul just didn't happen to mention such things, but it may very well be, and I think it more likely, that those phenomena had already disappeared or were disappearing from the life of the church. In 2 Timothy 4 we read that Paul had left his

assistant Trophimus in Miletus because the man was ill. This from a man whose handkerchiefs were, years before, powerful to heal the sick!

Text Comment

- v.1 The reference to Christ as “our hope,” is unique in the New Testament. The Greco-Roman world was a world without hope, really it was, very much in the same way that our culture over the last generation has become increasingly, noticeably, profoundly a culture without hope. Oh, people will make plans for the near future, they wish for this or long for that, some people crusade about this problem or that problem because of some expected impact on the future, but Hope with a capital “H” is missing from the modern heart. One of the most profound evidences of this in our own time is the plunging birth rates of Europe and North America. The distant future, the generations to come, and, supremely, the next world are not living realities to most people in the modern west. But for Christians, Christ has opened a sure and certain way to heaven, indeed, he has gone to prepare a place for us there. Our lives can be lived in the confidence of that beckoning future. And that is what the New Testament means by hope. Not a wish, but a firm and confident certainty about the future. *That* is hope! This kind of hope was then and has always been one of Christianity’s outstanding and absolutely unique features: there is no hope like this in Islam, there is only hope with a lower case “h”. You hope it will go well for you when you die, but you don’t really know whether it will or not. And to presume to know in Islam is arrogance. In Christianity such confidence is faith.

- v.2 For Paul to refer to Timothy as his “child in the faith” strongly suggests, though it doesn’t absolutely prove, that Timothy became a Christian under Paul’s influence on the apostle’s first missionary journey. But the statement also accents Timothy’s authority as one close to Paul and having his confidence.

And that’s important because though the letter is addressed to Timothy and in a variety of respects it is undoubtedly a personal letter, there is much in it that seems to have been addressed to the church in Ephesus as well. It is true that the letter was addressed to Timothy; that is, it is a personal letter. But there is much in it that seems to be addressed to the church in Ephesus as well. Cf. for example Paul’s statement in 2:7 that sounds somewhat defensive in a letter to a close friend, but makes all the sense in the world written to a church that was dabbling with teaching very different from what they had learned from Paul himself. This letter may have been written to Timothy but it may well have been intended to be read to the church in Ephesus.

- v.3 What seems to be suggested is that at some point Paul and Timothy had met face to face *after* Paul had left his younger associate in Ephesus to deal with the false teaching there.

Timothy had left Ephesus to consult with his mentor and his boss -- perhaps in hopes of rejoining him in his itinerant ministry (apparently they didn't have email in those days!) -- but had been told to return to Ephesus and to complete his work there. He wasn't an officer of the church in Ephesus but something like an "apostolic delegate." [Jeremias in Mounce, lviii] Paul hoped to visit Ephesus himself soon, as he says in 3:14-15. The fact that he is writing this letter *after the two men had talked face to face and no doubt at great length about the situation in Ephesus*, is some indication, again, that this letter to Timothy was also intended to be read to the church. [Mounce, 16]

"Certain persons" apparently included some of the church's leadership. All the named false teachers in First and Second Timothy are men, but women were involved as well as we shall see. As to the false teaching itself, here is one summary:

"It appears to have been a form of aberrant Judaism with Hellenistic/gnostic tendencies that overemphasized the law and underemphasized Christ and faith, taught dualism [in which the spiritual was emphasized at the expense of the physical], asceticism, denied a physical resurrection [a viewpoint that often went with dualism], was unduly interested in the minutiae of the OT, produced sinful lifestyles and irrelevant quibbling about words, and was destroying the reputation of the church in Ephesus." [Mounce, 19]

- v.4 "Myths and endless genealogies" describes at least some of the "different teaching" mentioned in the previous verse. Apparently these false teachers, as have a number of false teachers have through the ages, mined the OT genealogies and their hosts of names and fashioned from them stories that were then used to teach a certain way of life [Towner, 110-111], a way of life quite different from that taught by the Lord and his apostles.
- v.7 Trouble was afoot in Ephesus. How much the teaching there resembled that which had troubled the Colossian church sometime before is difficult to say, though clearly there are similarities. The false teaching was Jewish in origin but mixed in elements of Hellenistic thought as well. The teachers encouraged lax living and a variety of religious enthusiasms and speculative superstitions that had nothing to do with biblical truth or the historical record of the good news of Jesus Christ and, what is more, provided no encouragement for the holy life that the apostles had taught their converts. Like most Christian heresy, the false elements came from the culture (either Jewish or Roman), and jazzed up the apostolic message in a way that would prove attractive to people of that time and place.

We will detect a sense of urgency in First Timothy because the false teachers had enjoyed some measure of success in winning converts to their views and in persuading people in

the church to change their behavior accordingly. Some were forsaking marriage, for example, some were claiming that the resurrection had already occurred.

(If that sounds ridiculous to you, the simple fact of the matter is we've had evangelical movements within the last thirty years that have claimed that the resurrection has already occurred. Charles Spurgeon provided a blurb for a friend of his who published a book on the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of the nineteenth century. Spurgeon said very clearly in the blurb that he didn't agree with the argument of the book, but he loved his friend and thought it was something that Christians should read and think about. That book claimed that the resurrection of the Second Coming had already occurred. Don't imagine that somehow or other these people were primitives. Virtually every heresy they ever thought up we've found attractive in our own day.)

In any case, as Paul will say in verse 19 of chapter 1, some had already made shipwreck of their faith.

We've spent a good bit of our time tonight in introduction. But the folk in Ephesus knew what Paul was talking about and we don't. They knew Timothy and we needed to be reminded of just who and what he was. But there are great lessons here for us, even in what we have said by way of introduction to the letter.

The first and perhaps most obvious lesson is that the church always lives on a knife edge or, to mix metaphors, her life hangs by a thread. It is the truth that sets her free and she is always in danger of letting that life-giving truth slip from her fingers. It has happened times without number, it is happening today. What is perhaps most remarkable is that it happened in the days of the apostles themselves. If there is any evidence that this is something we need to worry about, it's the fact that the church found it difficult to retain the truth even when the apostles were still in the world! We might suppose that in that day at least no one would have been tempted by *any* teaching that did not have the imprimatur of an apostle, one of the official, chosen delegates of the Lord Jesus himself. We might have thought that at the first hint of a departure from the teaching a church had received from the Apostle Paul, a man who had worked miracles and who had established the Christian church in city after city after where there had been no Christians before, I say at the first hint of teaching that departed to any degree from the teaching of the Apostle Paul that teacher would have been thrown out on his ear. But it was not so.

The churches in Galatia founded on his first journey were soon imbibing killing error brought by some traveling teachers who couldn't work the miracles that Paul had. The church in Corinth, which had enjoyed Paul's presence for upwards of two years, no sooner said farewell to its founder than it was welcoming teachers who were undermining the very doctrine that Paul had

been at such pains to lay as the foundation of that church. And so now the church in Ephesus, which Paul had spent upwards of three years of his life establishing, was sliding off the foundation Paul had laid for both faith and life, doctrine and ethics.

There are many sides to this oft repeated story, but one of which is that Christian people are unaccountably ready to hear almost anything and are far more easily persuaded than one might think to change their opinions about even the most fundamental truth if they are told to do so by someone with some authority, someone with charisma, someone with a powerful intellect and oratorical power. One of the amazing stories of mid-20th century Reformed Christianity is what happened at Westminster Chapel after the retirement of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Dr. Lloyd-Jones was, perhaps after only Billy Graham, the most influential preacher of the twentieth century's English speaking world. He was a revered figure; an amazing aura of authority surrounded the man. But Dr. Lloyd-Jones' hand-picked successor began almost immediately moving the church away from the position that the doctor had so famously established through the long years of his ministry. It wasn't a renunciation of the gospel; it wasn't heresy, but it was in many respects a root and branch replacement of the themes of Reformed theology that had dominated the pulpit in Lloyd-Jones' years there. We may wonder how such a thing could happen, how could a congregation so used to that teaching could substitute it for something so different so quickly, but happen it did.

The fact is, the story told in First Timothy is the story of the Christian church in the world, the story of rise and fall, of the embrace of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints and then, sooner than you might have thought possible, the betrayal of that same faith in due time. The truth -- the truth of the gospel, of salvation by God's grace through the life and work of Jesus Christ embraced by faith and the truth of what constitutes a godly life -- is the lifeblood of the church, and when the blood is lost -- whether by a slow bleed or a sudden and catastrophic injury -- the church must die.

I'm reading Ross Douthat's *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*. Douthat may be known to you as one of the token conservative columnists for the *New York Times*. It is a very depressing narrative thoughtfully and convincingly told. He recounts the decline of the Mainline Protestant denominations in the second half of the 20th century -- having accommodated the faith to the culture they were soon left only with the culture and no faith -- and then the similar accommodationist project pursued in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II, with similarly dismal results. But he goes on then to describe the resurgence of evangelicalism and conservative Roman Catholicism in the later years of the 20th century. That would seem to be a happy outcome but then he goes on to describe how once again that momentum was squandered when cultural accommodation continued to weaken the influence of the evangelical part of the church. In an effort to make Christianity attractive to the world she became too much like the world to remain of any interest to the world. The world, in other words, came to think that it already had,

albeit in slightly different forms, what the Christians were offering. Whether it was a health and wealth gospel -- a baptized materialism -- or a highly subjective message in which the God within or our experience of what we call God became more important than the God Almighty who made the heavens and the earth and who reveals himself and his will in his Holy Word, the world was left thinking that it could do what the church was doing as well as the church could do it, if not better.

What all of this reminds us of, of course, is First Timothy and Paul's urgent summons for the church in Ephesus to recover her soul before it was too late. The true faith is rigorous and must be. In Ephesus it was becoming less so. Christian living was becoming more worldly and certainly easier. Christians are servants of God in the Devil's world. We must part company with so much of what the world thinks it knows. But that was precisely what the Christians in Ephesus wanted *not* to do. It was taking its marching orders from the world while still indulging the illusion of Christian faith. How like so much of the American church today. It is revealing that the feminist revolution in American evangelical Christianity followed in lock step the feminist revolution in the culture as a whole. We will confront this issue in detail when we get to chapters 2 and 3.

Robert Yarbrough, Professor of New Testament at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, wrote an article some years ago in which he argued that the new interpretations of texts in First Timothy and elsewhere in the New Testament, but especially First Timothy 2, owed much more to the social climate of our time than to the biblical text itself. As part of his demonstration of that fact he conducted the kind of search that in the computer age is much easier to execute. What he found was that articles in scholarly journals dealing with the famous text in 1 Timothy 2:9-15, perhaps the most important single text on the question of male and female in the NT, the text in which Paul forbids women to teach men, were virtually non-existent until the mid-1980s and that when they did appear before then they largely confirmed the church's age-old understanding of that text. But since the mid-80s there has been a flood of such articles arguing in one way or another that the text must not stand in the way of the full equality of women in the church, including their holding church office and becoming preachers.

His conclusion was that the believing church got interested in the question and came to views favorable to a feminist interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 only after and as a result of the triumph of feminist views in American society as a whole. Feminist views of that text were virtually unheard of prior to the 1960s but have multiplied since. The impression seems to be that the church began to think like the world in regard to this question and then came to the Biblical text to find a way to get the world's conclusion from what Paul wrote. There were some very hostile responses to Dr. Yarbrough's article, some real howls from the evangelical scholarly community, because, of course, no Christian scholar wants to be told that he basically is letting the world lead

him around by the nose, that he went to the text of the Bible determined to find what he wanted to find there. But that is, in fact, an age-old story. Why should any of that surprise us?

We must maintain a very different understanding of God, of salvation, and of life, than does the world. We must live a very different life than the world, whether in marriage and family or in business and politics. We must be again a “third race,” the term used to describe Christians in the second and third centuries: a people apart, neither Gentiles nor Jews. On the other hand, we must have such confidence in our convictions that we proclaim them and embody them in such a way as to recommend them to the world. What Paul said so urgently to the Ephesians through Timothy, he would say just as urgently to the church in America today.

I know that many of you are wondering what sort of world your children and your grandchildren will inhabit when they are adults. You wonder how difficult it may prove to be to live a committed Christian life in a culture as hostile to Christianity as ours is becoming. You are wondering how difficult it is going to be to raise children to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ in a culture as hostile to that love and service as our culture will become. I don’t know what the next twenty years will bring, but the signs are not encouraging. But I know this, the Christian church for their sake, the sake of her children, must maintain herself in both doctrine and life. Its worship must remain faithful to the nature of the living God and the teaching of Holy Scripture. Its preachers must proclaim the whole counsel of God in both an unrepentant and winsome and persuasive way. Its husbands and wives must be expected to be and must prove themselves to be lovingly loyal to God and to one another. Parents must be committed to the spiritual formation of their children as followers of Christ. And men and women together must be determined to be Christians in every dimension of their lives and with respect to every part of their faith, the few parts the world agrees with and the many parts the world scorns. If she is not faithful, in a great many cases your children and grandchildren will not remain faithful either. What the Lord will do is up to him. But we, who know how often the church has allowed the truth to slip through her fingers, we who know that the result of that has always been men and women making shipwreck of their faith, I say we are doubly obliged to make sure it doesn’t happen here.

The second obvious lesson we have already before us is how essential to the church’s fidelity to the gospel and the Christian life is able and committed leadership. It is interesting and, I’m sure, entirely unintentional, that Douthat’s book is a narrative of the influence of certain men. You, sitting there in front of me tonight, I’m sure you think that you would stand firm for the truth even if your pastor began spouting error from this pulpit. And perhaps you would. But not all of you would. Evangelicals have always said that they would remain faithful to the Word of God no matter what, but error always found its entrance into the church when the church was entirely evangelical. You do the math. How is it that we have lost the truth over and over and over again through the ages? How is it that we are losing it again today? It’s because *real Christians* have allowed it to slip through their fingers. Church history proves that point with dismal regularity.

The likelihood is that no preacher would say straightaway that he wanted you to forget the gospel and to believe the world's ideas instead. It is never like that. Oh, no! What he is offering is a new insight into the gospel, a deeper appreciation of the gospel, a new way of stating it and of making it attractive to others. What he is offering is an exciting new way of conceiving of the Christian life that answers some of the problems we have all had in living our Christian lives, dealing with sin, and so on. The Devil always disguises himself as an angel of light. And before the church knows it, it has moved a long way from the fundamental truths of apostolic Christianity.

It was true in Paul's day and it is in our day that both heresy and truth are most influentially communicated by men of intellect who have the power to communicate. The Devil may, of course, make dumb ideas much more attractive than they ought to be, but, humanly speaking, a smart fellow who can communicate can make other reasonably intelligent people believe almost anything! We have seen more than enough of that in our country over the last generation.

These three letters -- the two to Timothy and the one to Titus -- have long been referred to as the Pastoral Epistles, though neither Timothy nor Titus was a pastor in the usual sense of the word. But they were doing the work of pastors as the assistants and representatives of the apostle Paul. These letters are instruction in how to deal with pastoral matters -- that is, with matters having to do with the oversight of Christian congregations -- and so their presence in the New Testament bears a powerful witness to the dependence of the church upon its leadership. The way Paul thought he had to address the problems in the Ephesian church was by sending someone to address them. In a hyper-egalitarian, anti-authority and anti-elitist culture such as ours, this is lesson we need to heed. It is part of our humility to admit we depend on able leadership, always have, always will. We depended on our parents when we were children, we depend upon our teachers when we are students, we depend upon our pastors, elders and deacons as Christians.

If you love your children and your grandchildren, if you wish for the church to survive American culture and to thrive again as a powerful force within this culture, you must pray for and do what you can to encourage the right sort of leadership in the church. *That* is much of what First Timothy is about: getting rid of the bad leadership and replacing it with the reliable sort. What Paul manifestly does not and will not say is that the people can handle this on their own or that they don't need godly leadership. They need it; they always need that. The church cannot survive and has not survived without godly men exercising an apostolic kind of ministry.

Do you know how practical all of this is? Do you realize how fundamentally important these large issues are to yourself, and to your family, your loved ones? I'll tell you. What you learn from First Timothy is that your future as a Christian and that of your children and grandchildren, and that of the church in your country, absolutely depends upon the church, not just you, but the church holding fast to a truth the world despises, holding fast to it come wind, come weather, *and* that, in the plan and purpose of God, that very loyalty will utterly depend upon men

who teach the church and require the church to remain faithful to the teaching that we find in the Bible.

I sometimes find myself talking to people whose heart-breaking problems, however intensely personal to them, I remind them are profoundly historical and cultural and ecclesiastical. We do not live our lives in isolation and cannot live them in isolation. The difficulty young women have today in finding worthy young men to marry is not the result of some sin they have committed. It is the result of profound changes in our culture that have resulted in the disintegration of noble masculinity. Jeremiah didn't live his life as a bachelor because he had done something wrong. He was born in the wrong place at the wrong time. The difficulty men are having in our time with sexual temptation is not simply the age-old problem of sexual desire. It is made much worse by the culture of pornography and the technology of pornography that are the hallmarks of our time. The same could be said about divorce, about homosexuality, about materialism, about political and legal developments, and on and on. The church's fidelity to the truth in the teeth of the culture's hostility or disinterest and its being furnished with able leadership will have everything to do with what kind of Christian life you live and even more the kind of Christian life your children and your grandchildren will live if, by God's grace, they live it. Large things have a tremendous influence on small things, institutions have tremendous influence over individuals; and so it is that the condition of the Christian church as a whole in a time, in a place, and in a culture will have everything to do with each and every Christian life. To know this is to be wise.