

The Purpose of a Pattern

I am aware from the very beginning that there are those who decry the idea of a pattern for our religious practices. Some are opposed to what they call “pattern mentality.” Should this cause us to move away from a discussion of such in an objective manner? I think not and so do many other people.

When you speak of a pattern you speak of a plan to follow. You speak of that which is like a map or blueprint. It speaks of something that has been revealed to man in such a way that he can know what God will expect of him. This is surely the case in God’s dealings with man.

We should have no reluctance in using the term “pattern.” Did not God use that word when speaking to Moses (Exo. 25:9, 40)? Is this not the same word that was used by the writer of the book of Hebrews when he said, “See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5)? Listen to the apostle Paul, “Hold the pattern of sound words which thou has heard from me” (2 Tim. 1:13-ASV). How would it be possible for one to hold a pattern if one did not exist? The term “hold” carries the idea of “adherence to.” But how could you adhere to that which does not exist? Yes, there is a pattern and it serves a very useful purpose. We need to take the time to look at some of the purposes of a pattern.

A Pattern Gives Direction

None of us should deny the need for direction for “*it is* in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Such was surely the case with Noah in the long ago. When he was told to build the ark; he was told exactly what to do. (Gen. 6:14). He was told to use “gopher wood.” That would mean only gopher wood. He was given directions as to its size. These directions were followed (Gen. 6:22). He had no trouble knowing what God wanted him to do for he had a pattern to follow.

We have a pattern, which gives direction as to what we are to say. Peter points this out when he says, “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). So a man has a pattern to follow as he speaks. He is not left to say just anything in the name of the Lord. It must be according to an in harmony with the words of God. He has a pattern for his speech. This would surely be a part of the reason men are not to add to or take from the Word of the Lord. Such would alter the pattern and in so doing not say what God’s Word would say.

A Pattern Promotes Unity

If all follow the same pattern, and we must, then all will speak the same thing. There will be unity of speech if all “hold fast the pattern of sound words.” This would be a part of the reason Paul would say, “the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Take a moment to look at that passage.

Paul says, “the things.” That would mean something understandable. It would mean the propositional truth that Timothy heard from Paul. It would be the teaching of an apostle. This becomes the pattern. This is the blueprint that is to be followed. After such is heard, this could in turn be passed on by teaching other men. Those men would be able to pass this same thing on also. This would surely insure unity of speech. This would mean that one generation after

another could continue to speak the same thing. Culture or the passing of time would not

change it.

Such will promote unity of action. Paul knew that this possibility existed for he said, “as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Cor. 16:1). By following the words of the apostle as a pattern for action, you will have unity of action. All in the church of Corinth could do as all in the churches of Galatia. This would be consistent with what Paul had said before, “as I teach every where in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). If all those churches would follow the pattern laid out by Paul’s teaching, you would have unity of action. There would be no division.

A Pattern Preserves Identity

The thing that helped identify the child of God under the Old Testament was the pattern which he followed. He was given certain instructions as to how he was to act. You will find that the Jew was to observe the Sabbath as a holy day (Exo. 28:8). This would serve to set him apart from the inhabitants of the land into which they came. They would be identified by such practices as they followed the Lord. His Word being the pattern for their lives.

This is also true of the child of God today. He is what he is because he follows a certain form or pattern of teaching. In fact, Paul said of those at Rome: “ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). This would be equal to saying they have obeyed the gospel. Each one of those in the church at Rome would be what he or she was because they have all followed that same pattern in obedience. They have all come from the same form or mold and thus would all be the same. They would all be one in Christ. There would be no difference in their religious identify. As long as men follow the same pattern then they will all be the same.

As you see the gospel move throughout the Roman world; you see men and women following the same instructions. They are all Christians. You do not have one kind of a Christian in Jerusalem and another kind in Antioch. They all came from the same mold or pattern. The same seed that was planted in Jerusalem was also planted in Antioch. The seed brings forth after its kind (Gen. 1:12). Such will surely preserve identity. That is surely the case with the gospel, which is the pattern for all that follow in matters that pertain to the soul.

Winfred Clark