

According to the Pattern

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even, Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:1-4).

Throughout the scriptures, analogies are made to building. Jesus once said, “Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock” (Matthew 7:24). And, the apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians, saying, “According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon” (1 Corinthians 3:10).

When Jesus “asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?,” “Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Upon the foundation of that confession, Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

The question before us is this: “Should the building reflect the mind of the builder, or the mind of he who built thereon?” When Moses was instructed, concerning the furnishings of the tabernacle, Jehovah said, “see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40).

This command applied to the whole of the tabernacle, as the Hebrew writer affirmed, saying, “even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount” (Hebrews 5:8).

To this principle, the apostle Paul said, “let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon” (1 Corinthians 3:10). To which, the apostle Paul says, “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

In the text, this “temple” was the called-out body, the church, in Corinth. The relationship of the “called-out body” was described by the apostle Peter, saying, “ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5), and also, “ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (Ibid, vs. 9).

The apostle Paul wrote to the brethren in Ephesus, saying, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Ephesians 4:1-6). As certain as there is one God and Father, one Lord, and one Spirit, common to all Christians, there is also one body: the church. Christians have been called in one hope of your calling (salvation), and one faith (system of faith), as described by Jude (1:3); and there is also but one baptism, common to all Christians.

That one baptism is that which was described by the apostle Peter, concerning the salvation of Cornelius, saying, “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized...And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47-48). What this baptism accomplishes was described by Ananias, saying to Saul of Tarsus, “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16), which agrees with the apostle Peter's command to Cornelius, and the Lord's command to the apostles to “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20), and “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

In regard to the local church, there is also a pattern by which it is to be established. The apostle Paul told Timothy that “men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). As it was that the apostle Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, “I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God” (Ephesians 20:27), and the apostle Peter’s statement “that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:3-4), it is axiomatic, as the apostle Paul said to Timothy, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), that all things concerning the church, universal and local, in its establishment and functions had been delivered by the time the writings of the apostles were complete, and if not, why not?

Since Christ is the foundation and builder of the church, universal and local, would it not follow that the church universal, and all local churches who bear the name of Christ would be united in “one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all, and in all” (Ibid.)?

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921), Professor of Theology at Princeton, said, “If everything that is called Christianity in these days is Christianity, then there is no such thing as Christianity. A name applied indiscriminately to everything, designates nothing.” The clock of time may pass, but the nature of man seems to remain the same.