

11th September 2020

Patterns

**“I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house,
and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket,
which he shewed as a pattern to encourage purchasers.”**

Jonathan Swift, The Drapier's Letters

Yippee! We now have our kitchen table and chairs, and our kitchen is complete. Well, almost ... for we're still debating the configuration. What way round should the table go, short end or long side to the wall? Two chairs on each long side facing each other, or a chair at all four sides? One chair tucked in the back and the other three in use? We're still working on it and we'll have to see how our choices settle down to a workable pattern.

How do we decide? How it feels; whether it functions; flexibility issues; what's worked before; things we've seen elsewhere; how it looks? There are so many things to be considered, all of which have something to say to the configuration of our kitchen, the pattern we'll adopt.

Jonathan Swift's house-seller used a piece of brick for his pattern. But how do we decide on the configuration of our lives? There are many things which influence our patterns of living, our behaviour, attitudes, faith, political allegiance, morals, relationships. Some we're aware of, and some we're not. Years ago, when I was trying to understand why I behaved in certain ways, I worked with a *Transactional Analysis* Counsellor. Part of that model is to uncover "drivers" from childhood which affect us as adults. Now, I have a passion for timekeeping, a fixation never to be late. Where does that pattern come from? From a childhood driver of my mother insisting I "hurry up" all the time. So, I find it hard to free myself from the pressure of that influence – sixty years on. Knowing what that driver is doesn't release me from the time-keeping obsession, but understanding where it comes from helps me be aware of what's happening and allows me to moderate things enough that I don't become impossible to live with.

It's good to pause and work out where our patterns of life come from. At least, then, we might be more comfortable with whatever way round we find ourselves, just as we hope to be with our new kitchen table.

Prayer for today

Lord, turn me round so that my pattern of living fits with what you would want. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>