

Time to Tuck-point?

by Sir Knight George J. Harrison

Past Grand Commander of Iowa

I've been thinking a lot lately about buildings; their structural integrity and how sound they are, their state of repair and cost of maintenance, and what it takes to maintain them especially brick and stone buildings. After all, I work in a structure that is 80 years old.

Tuck-pointing is defined as "the process of removing old mortar from between bricks or stones and replacing it with new mortar." It is often done to walls of building that have begun to deteriorate, have become so worn by the elements that they no longer provide the protection and support for which they were erected. If ignored and allowed to deteriorate further, they can even become a danger to those in and around the structure.

As Masons, we are taught to use the tools of operative Masonry as the building blocks with which we erect the Temple of Souls, our Masonic Character. In the first degree we are presented with the 24-inch gauge and the common gavel and taught to divide our time and divest ourselves of the vices and superfluities of life. As a Fellowcraft, the plumb teaches us to walk uprightly before God and man, using the square to square our actions and the level to remind us that we are walking on that level of time to that undiscovered country from whose borne no traveler returns. Finally, we are presented with the Master's especial tool, the trowel, to be used to spread the cement of brotherly love and friendship, that cement which binds to stones presented earlier into the structure of our character. If you are a Master Mason-really and truly a Master Mason-you know that there is far more. Additional stones are presented in the lectures of the three Symbolic degrees. Still more are quarried in the degrees and orders of the York Rite and those of the Scottish Rite. As we advance in Masonry, our inner structure, if properly attended to, raises more stately and magnificent.

As an operative building needs constant maintenance to keep it whole and sound, so does the structure of our Masonic character. But even with regular maintenance, over time, tuckpointing will become necessary for a building. The same holds true for the structure of our Masonic character. We must continually maintain ourselves Masonically by continually participating in the degrees and practicing the truths that they teach. How do you know if it's time for a little Masonic tuck-pointing? First, step outside yourself and take a critical look at yourself. Have you lost your temper at someone who you think isn't driving fast enough? Have you waved a finger at someone that "cut you off"? Have you sat and talked about a Brother in an unkind manner? Have you repeated a confidence or disliked someone simply because they were a different race or nationality or practiced a different religion? Have you stopped talking to someone because they didn't agree with what you thought, lost your patience with your wife, children or grandchildren, or with a friend or Brother? Have you used God's name in vain lately or driven over the speed limit or overindulged in food or drink? If you are guilty of any of these, even just a little guilty, perhaps it's time that the structure of your Masonic character underwent a little speculative tuck-pointing.

So what is speculative tuck-pointing? Relearn the lessons taught to you in the degrees. Better yet, help introduce others to them. Attend the degrees of the Rites, both Scottish and York. Not a member of one or the other? Join. The lessons of both Rites become clearer when you participate in both Rites.

Now that you have been reintroduced to the teachings of Masonry, begin to practice them-every day. The more you practice them the more they will become part and parcel of your daily life.

And when this is done, you will be able to look at yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and know you have done what you believed to be best for yourself, for your Brother, for your family, for your country, and for your God.

Oh, yes, and by the way, if the next time you see me, you notice a little scaffolding around the structure of my Masonic character, don't be surprised. I will be undergoing a little speculative tuck-pointing.

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