

THE PERFECT POINT OF ENTRANCE

by Bro. Jeff Young

I'm sure many of you may have noticed some parts of our rituals which are not clearly explained or understood, yet we commit them to memory and at appointed times recite them without question. One phrase that has always intrigued me is the introduction of the "Perfect Points of Entrance."

In the First Degree lecture, we learn that there are four "Perfect Points of Entrance", which are the Guttural (throat), Pectoral (breast), Manual (hands) and Pedal (feet). It is further explained that these four points are illustrated by signs and they are representative of the four Cardinal Virtues – Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice. However, at no time these Cardinal Virtues associated with our new Brother's entrance to the Lodge or Masonry. While the Cardinal Virtues are explained in our Grand Lodge Ahiman Rezon, the only reference one can find to the Four Perfect Points of Entrance is in an image representing the candidate in the First Degree – Third Section. So, does the "Four Perfect Points of Entrance" refer to the entrance of the First Degree candidate into something, or of something into the candidate?

A bit puzzled why the Four Perfect Points of Entrance performed by a candidate to the First Degree are so clearly pointed out during the lecture, yet not mentioned anywhere else in the ensuing rituals or writings, I decided to do some research into these points to see how they connected with the ritual work as well as the associated Cardinal Virtues.

I discovered documentation (Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia) that the pendants to the four corners of the Lodge room are representative of four tassels. I further discovered that these four tassels are described as referring to the four principal points – guttural, pectoral, manual and pedal – and they represent four of the Cardinal Virtues – Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. It would appear we have found our connection.

I further discovered that each of the principal points is explained as follows:

Guttural is representative of the Northwest corner of the Lodge and come from the Latin guttur, or the throat. The throat is the avenue of the body which is most employed in committing the sins of intemperance, and is suggestive of the symbolic instructions relating to the virtue of Temperance. The Mason, who appreciates the secrets which he has solemnly promised never to reveal, will not to yield to the temptation of divulging these secrets nor speak ill of any fellow Brother or man.

Pectoral is representative of the Northeast corner of the Lodge and comes from the Latin precuts, or the breast. Since the heart has always been considered the seat of fortitude and courage, this would seem to suggest Masons should bear the hardships of life without compromise to his fidelity and resolve to safeguard and follow the secrets and beliefs of the fraternity.

Manual is representative of the Southeast corner of the Lodge and relates to the hand, from the Latin manus. We are reminded of the necessity and prudence to the careful observance of all pledges and duties we vowed to follow within the fraternity and is symbolic of the virtue of Prudence. Prudence, being one of the four Cardinal Virtues, the practice we were first introduced to in the First Degree where we found Prudence to be the true guide to human understanding, and consisting of judging and determining with propriety what is to be said or done, what dangers we should avoid, and how to act in any difficult situation.

Pedal is representative of the Southwest corner of the Lodge and relates to the feet, from the Latin pedes. As just men and Masons, we are to firmly plant our feet on the principals of right, while maintaining that upright position, as a man and Mason, among all mankind, and should never fail to act justly to himself, to his brethren and to the world. This principal point is reflective of the Cardinal Virtue of Justice.

Therefore, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice designate the Perfect Points of Entrance, and refer to the four perfect points of entrance as described in the First Degree.

We might consider the Perfect Points of Entrance, not necessarily in the order in which they are listed, as: the reception upon the point of a sharp instrument, the due guard, the penal sign, and the position in the northeast corner of the lodge upon the first step of Freemasonry, which allude to obligations, penalties, and moral responsibilities. These would seem to be the principal points of a candidate's entry into the Lodge, and would explain, and perhaps support the importance of "The Perfect Points of Entrance" in our First Degree ritual.