

Symbolic meaning of the pentagram

The **Pentagram** is a symbol of a star encased in a circle. Always with 5 points (one pointing upward), each has its own meaning. The upward point of the star is representative of the spirit. The other four points all represent an element; earth, air, fire, and water. All these things contribute to life and are a part of each of us.

To wear a **pentagram** necklace or other form of jewelry, is to say you feel the connection with the elements and respect the earth.

The number 5

The number 5 has always been regarded as mystical and magical, yet essentially 'human'. We have five fingers/toes on each limb extremity. We commonly note five senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. We perceive five stages or initiations in our lives - eg. birth, adolescence, coitus, parenthood and death. (There are other numbers / initiations / stages / attributions).

Pentagram as a symbol of paganism:

<http://www.webcom.com/~lstead/wicatron.html>

Symbols :

Here the differences are obvious. The predominant symbol for Wicca (and for many, Paganism in general) is the pentagram. The predominant Ásatrú symbol is, of course, the hammer. While various interpretations for the pentagram abound, a common understanding of the religious meaning of the symbol is that it represents five equidistant elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Spirit, each bound within the circle of life, death, and rebirth. Here then is a display of a central ideology behind Wicca: to live one's life in harmony with these elements, representative of features of the self, and in union with the cycles of nature. There are other interpretations of the pentagram such as a human figure, limbs outstretched bound by the cosmos or the cycle of nature, but nearly all of these explanations of the pentagram examine it as a glyph with a symbolic importance other than as a simple symbol of the faith.

The pentagram and the figure 5:

<http://www.angelfire.com/id/robpurvis/pentagram.html>

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Five were the virtues of the medieval knight - generosity, courtesy, chastity, chivalry and piety as symbolised in the pentagram device of Sir Gawain. The Wiccan Kiss is Fivefold - feet, knees, womb, breasts, lips - Blessed be.

The number 5 is prime. The simplest star - the pentagram - requires five lines to draw and it is unicursal; it is a continuous loop.

Very good history of the pentagram:

<http://www.fabrisia.com/pentagram.htm>

Early Christians attributed the pentagram to the Five Wounds of Christ and from then until medieval times, it was a lesser-used Christian symbol. Prior to the time of the Inquisition, there were no evil associations to the pentagram. Rather its form implied Truth, Religious Mysticism and the work of The Creator. The Emperor Constantine I who, after gaining the help of the Christian church in his military and religious takeover of the Roman Empire in 312 AD, used the pentagram, together with the chi-rho symbol (a symbolic form of cross) in his seal and amulet.

Another short history and judgement about the role of the pentagram today:

<http://journey1.org/freedom/pentagram.htm>

The antiquity of the pentagram is certain; its meanings and associations have evolved and enriched throughout its history. Its use within modern Neo-Paganism as a group symbol is as important as the cross has been in the history of Christianity and it is in the ubiquity and the attributed meanings of the symbol that its potency lies rather than in its antiquity. From the Earth aware attitudes and respect of life of modern Pagans has already come the movement towards protecting and conserving the ecology and resources of our planet. Perhaps they will see the dawn of a real new age of hope or perhaps just the end of an age of humanity.

The pentagram has long been associated with mystery and magic. It is the simplest form of star shape that can be drawn unicursally, with a single line, hence it is sometimes called the Endless Knot. Other names are the Goblin Cross, the Pentalpha, the Witch Foot, the Devils Star and the Seal of Solomon (more correctly attributed to the hexagram).

It has long been believed to be a potent protection against evil and demons, hence a symbol of safety, and was sometimes worn as an amulet for happy homecoming. The old folk-song : Green Grow the Rushes, O! refers to the use of the pentagram above doors and windows in the line: Five is the symbol at your door.

The potency and associations of the pentagram have evolved throughout history. Today it is an ubiquitous symbol of Neo-Pagans with much depth of magical and symbolic meaning.

The pentagram symbol today is ascribed many meanings and deep significance, though much of this is very recent. However, it has been used throughout history and in many contexts.

The earliest known use of the pentagram dates back to around the Uruk period around 3500BC at Ur of the Chaldees in Ancient Mesopotamia where it was found on potsherds together with other signs of the period associated with the earliest known developments of written language. In later periods of Mesopotamian art, the pentagram was used in royal inscriptions and was symbolic of imperial power extending out to the four corners of the world. Amongst the Hebrews, the symbol was ascribed to Truth and to the five books of the Pentateuch. It is sometimes, incorrectly, called the Seal of Solomon (see Hexagram) though its usage was in parallel with the hexagram. In Ancient Greece, it was called the Pentalpha, being geometrically composed of five A's. Unlike earlier civilizations, the Greeks did not generally attribute other symbolic meanings to the letters of their alphabet, but certain symbols became connected with Greek letter shapes or positions (eg Gammadion, Alpha-Omega). The geometry of the pentagram and its metaphysical associations were explored by the Pythagoreans (after Pythagoras 586-506BC) who considered it an emblem of perfection. Together with other discovered knowledge of geometric figures and proportion, it passed down into post-Hellenic art where the golden proportion may be seen in the designs of some temples.

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However, it was the cross (a symbol of suffering) rather than the pentagram (a symbol of truth) that was used as a symbol by the Church which subsequently came to power and whose manifest destiny was to usurp the supreme power of the Roman Empire.

The annual church feast of Epiphany, celebrating the visit of the three Magi to the infant Jesus as well as the Church's mission to bring truth to the Gentiles had as its symbol the pentagram, (although in present times the symbol has been changed to a five-pointed star in reaction to the Neo-Pagan use of the pentagram).

In the legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the pentagram was Sir Gawain's glyph, inscribed in gold on his shield, symbolizing the five knightly virtues - generosity, courtesy, chastity, chivalry and piety.

In Medieval times, the Endless Knot was a symbol of Truth and was a protection against demons. It was used as an amulet of personal protection and to guard windows and doors. The pentagram with one point upwards symbolized summer; with two points upwards, it was a sign for winter. During the long period of the Inquisition, there was much promulgation of lies and accusations in the interests of orthodoxy and elimination of heresy. The Church lapsed into a long period of the very diabolism it sought to oppose. The pentagram was seen to symbolize a Goats Head or the Devil in the form of Baphomet and it was Baphomet whom the Inquisition accused the Templars of worshipping. The Dominicans of the Inquisition moved their attention from the Christian heretics to the Pagan Witches, to those who only paid lip-service to Christianity but still followed an Old Religion and to the wise-ones amongst them. In the purge on Witches, other horned Gods such as Pan became equated with the Devil (a Christian concept) and the pentagram, the folk symbol of security, for the first time in history, was equated with evil and was called the Witches Foot.

The Old Religion and its symbols went underground, in fear of the Church's persecution, and there it stayed, gradually withering, for centuries.

In the foundation of Hermeticism, in hidden societies of craftsmen and scholarly men, away from the eyes of the Church and its paranoia, the proto-science of alchemy developed along with its occult philosophy and cryptical symbolism. Graphical and geometric symbolism became very important and the period of the Renaissance emerged.

The concept of the microcosmic world of Man as analogous to the macrocosm, the greater universe of spirit and elemental matter became a part of traditional western occult teaching, as it had long been in eastern philosophies, As Above, So Below. The pentagram, the Star of the Microcosm, symbolized Man within the microcosm, representing in analogy the Macrocosmic universe.

The upright pentagram bears some resemblance to the shape of man with his legs and arms outstretched. In Tycho Brahe's *Calendarium Naturale Magicum Perpetuum* (1582) occurs a

pentagram with human body imposed and the Hebrew for YHSVH associated with the elements. An illustration attributed to Brae's contemporary Agrippa (Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim) is of similar proportion and shows the five planets and the moon, at the centre point, the genitalia. Other illustrations of the period by Robert Fludd and Leonardo da Vinci show geometric relationships of man to the universe.

Later, the pentagram came to be symbolic of the relationship of the head to the four limbs and hence of the pure concentrated essence of anything (or the spirit) to the four traditional elements of matter, earth, water, air and fire - spirit is The Quintessence.

In Freemasonry, Man as Microprosopus was and is associated with the five-pointed Pentalpha. The symbol was used, interlaced and upright for the sitting Master of the Lodge. The geometric properties and structure of the Endless Knot were appreciated and symbolically incorporated into the 72 degree angle of the compasses, the Masonic emblem of virtue and duty. The origins of Freemasonry are lost in the depths of history, obscured by the traditional Craft secrecy of the order, but there are signs throughout history of the associations of craftsmanship and ritual and symbolism that have remained known only to a few, and the history of the pentagram has remained occluded in the same kind of mystery. The women's branch of Freemasonry uses the five pointed Eastern Star with two points up as its emblem. Each point commemorates a heroine of biblical lore.

No known graphical illustration associating the pentagram with evil appears until the nineteenth century. Eliphas Levi Zahed (actually the pen name of Alphonse Louis Constant, a defrocked French Catholic Abb) illustrates the upright pentagram of microcosmic man beside an inverted pentagram with the goats head of Baphomet. It is this illustration and juxtaposition that has led to the concept of different orientations of the pentagram being good and evil.

Against the rationalism of the 18th century came a reaction in the 19th century with the growth of a new mysticism owing much to the Holy Cabala, the ancient oral tradition of Judaism relating the cosmogony of God and the universe and the moral and occult truths of their relationship to Man. It is not so much a religion as a system of understanding based upon symbolism and the numerical and alphabetical interrelationships of words and concepts, the Gematria.

The Golden Dawn did much to advance and disseminate the roots of modern Hermetic Cabala around the world in its time of strength (from 1888 to around the start of the First World War), and through the writings and work of a number of its adepts and adherents have come some of the most important ideas of today's Cabalist philosophy and magic. In the 1940's Gerald Gardner adopted the pentagram with two points upward as the sigil of second degree initiation in the newly emergent, Neo-Pagan rituals of Witchcraft, later to become known as Wicca. The one-point upward pentagram together with the upright triangle symbolized third degree initiation. (A point downwards triangle is the symbol of First Degree Initiates).

It was not until the late 1960's that the pentagram again became an amuletic symbol to be worn. Co-incidentally with the rise of popular interest in Witchcraft and Wicca and the publication of many books (including several novels) on the subject, there was a reaction to the Church.

In its extreme, one aspect of that reaction was in the establishment of the satanic cult - The Church of Satan - by Anton LaVay. For its emblem, this cult adopted the inverted pentagram

after the Baphomet image of Eliphas Levi. The reaction of the Christian church was to condemn as evil all who took the pentagram as a symbol and even to condemn the symbol itself, much as had been the post-war attitude to the swastika.

The distinction between the point-upwards and point-downwards pentagram forms became accentuated in the minds of Pagans and led to the concepts of white Witchcraft and black. Those who took on board the strong personal ethical code of Wicca, the Wiccan Rede of 'An it harm none, do what you will' did not wish to be tarred with the same brush as the Satanists whose philosophy is one of the domination of the spirit by the physical body - the priority of matter and physical existence.

Hence, despite the use and the different meaning of the inverted pentagram as a symbol of Gardnerian initiation, other Wiccans, notably in the USA where the fundamentalist Christians are particularly aggressive to those who do not share their beliefs, are against any usage of the symbol. It is sad to say that even the use of the upright pentagram gives rise to social discrimination against Pagans in some communities.

Otherwise, the pentagram or pentacle has become firmly established as a common Neo-Pagan and Wiccan symbol, acquiring many aspects of mystique and associations that are today often considered to be ancient folk-lore !

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Source:

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The **pentagram** is one of the most potent, powerful, and persistent symbols in human history. It was important to almost every ancient culture, from the Mayans of Latin America, in India, China, and Egypt. It has been found scratched on the walls of Neolithic caves, or in Babylonian drawings, where it marks the pattern the planet Venus makes on its travels. Scriptures, especially Hebrew, are abundant with hidden references to them.

According to Pythagoras, the Greek mathematician and philosopher, five is the number of man, because of the fivefold division of the body, and the ancient Greek div of the soul- the five points each representing one of the five elements that make up man: fire, water, air, and earth, and psyche.

This particular symbolism has persisted for centuries, and greatly influenced theologies of diverse traditions. It is central to many doctrines of esoteric Medieval and Renaissance traditions- alchemy, Cabbala, and Ceremonial magic.

Ritual magicians used the Pentagram as a microcosm of the human body. One of these, Giordano Bruno, warned of misuse by Black magicians because of its great power. The pentagram is still central to the practice of ritual magic, and is used in most foundation rituals.

In the Jewish Cabalistic tradition, which borrows many Pythagorean ideas, the pentagram represents the five upper sephiroth on the tree of Life; five numbers, which being indivisible by any but themselves, represent pure archetypal forces: justice, mercy, wisdom, understanding, and transcendent splendor.

Christian Cabbalists were especially enamored of the **pentagram**- to them, it symbolized Christ as the Holy Spirit manifest in the flesh. A favorite geometric feat was to add the Hebrew letter Shin (symbolizing fire and the holy spirit) to the Biblical four letter name of God (YHVH) yielding YHShH- Yehoshua, or Jesus. (There is a secret biblical connection, as well, in the name of the Christian holiday of Pentecost- the day the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles of Jesus).

This is not the only connection of the pentagram to Christianity. Before the cross, it was a preferred symbol to adorn jewelry and amulets. It was associated with the five wounds of Christ, and because it could be drawn in one continuous movement of the pen, the Alpha and the omega. It was also an expression of a secret Gnostic heresy, found hidden here and there throughout Christian history. The most notable instance of this symbolism is in the Arthurian Grail romances, which are Gnostic and cabbalistic teachings disguised as tales of knightly quests.

Currently, the most common religious uses of the pentagram are by Wiccan, Neopagan, and Satanic groups. In most Wiccan and Neopagan traditions, its symbolic meaning is derived from Medieval Ceremonial magic, the four elements ruled by the spirit- although as these theologies mature, they have added to its meaning. In many of these, it can symbolize the unity of mankind with the earth or with the realm of the spirit.

The Satanic pentagram is a difficult symbol. It is presented upside-down, or inverted, with a single point facing downward. This glyph was a representation of Black magic, symbolizing the triumph of matter and material desires over the spirit. In modern satanic theology, it is far more likely to represent the individual, or the choice to pursue individual glory or immortality rather than union or absorption- where some traditions advocated the sublimation of the ego, Satanism exalts it. The symbol most commonly associated with satanic practices is the "Sabbatic goat" or Goat of Mendes, often associated with Baphomet, a figure from Templar legend, and Pan, the Greek goat God. It rarely has any deeper meaning; an irony when one considers that its association with Satanism has made the pentagram feared symbol to many.

Surprisingly, the pentagram also plays an important part in the symbology of the early United States government (a fact not lost on some Christian conspiracy theorists). Many of the Founding Fathers were masons, to whom the **Pentagram** is an important symbol- it appears in much of our early iconography- the flag, the Great Seal, and on our money. It is even to be found in the Capitol, where the white house sits at the apex of a giant **pentagram**.

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