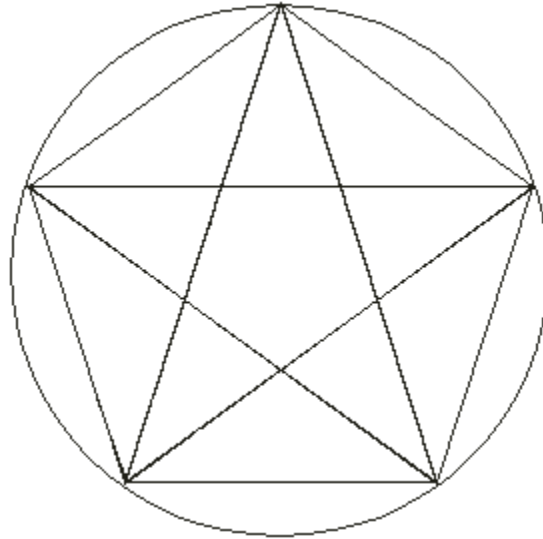


THE SACRED PENTAGRAM



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INTRODUCTION

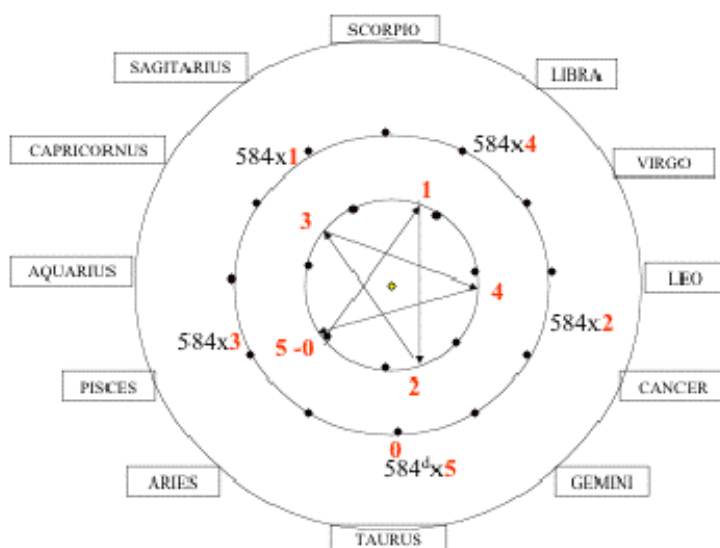
Central on our Rosicrucian Altars in the *S.R.I.C.F.* is the figure of the Pentagram (also called the pentacle, pentalpha, pentangle, pentacle), a five pointed star, formed by 5 straight lines between the vertices of a pentagon and enclosing another pentagon. The name pentagram is Greek, from *penta* (“five”) and *gramma* (“letter”). One of the most intriguing symbols of esotericism, it is has been held to have magical properties since time immemorial, and is a symbol that has been both revered by initiates as a talisman of power, and shunned by the masses in abject fear for hundreds of years.

Today the image of the five pointed star has become almost obsequious to the media, and the symbol has been used to promote Rock music and movies, feed Satanic furor with tales of “ritual slayings,” and other hype. Additionally, the many neo-pagan movements have adopted the pentagram as their ensign of “natural religion.” More recently, novels such as *The Davinci Code* have weaved a colorful blend of fact and fiction, and once again brought the image of the Pentagram into popular view. At the same time, there is a long, somewhat quiet esoteric history of usage associated with this symbol which initiates in all times have utilized.

Despite the seeming commonplace appearance of this symbol, it is little understood. This paper will endeavor to highlight some of the symbolic meanings of the pentagram, looking at historical usage across cultures and languages; Masonic usage in both the Craft and Higher Degrees, with emphasis on our Rosicrucian usage; the geometric properties inherent in the symbol, and western occult traditions of initiation and ceremonial magick. It is hoped that this paper will help to cut through the popular misinformation about this symbol, and shed some Light on the real properties and use of this powerful, sacred figure.

HISTORICAL USAGE

Although the origin of this symbol is lost in time, some occult authorities try to trace the source of its esoteric significance back to an astronomical phenomena, the so called “Pentagram of Venus” shown in the figure below¹:



¹ Image from the European Southern Observatory website: <http://www.vt-2004.org/Education/edu1app5.html>

The synodic period of Venus is approximately 584 days. Plotting the greatest elongation west or east of this movement five successive times over a period of approximately 8 years and 5 days traces the figure of a Pentagram on the Zodiacal belt. Incidentally, the numbers 5 and 8 continue to play a role in the Rosicrucian symbolism of the pentagram, as will be seen further on.

The pentagram has been found on potsherds from the pre-cuneiform Uruk period of ancient Babylon (3500BCE). In later periods of Mesopotamian civilization it appears in cuneiform writing to represent the four cardinal directions with the fifth point representing “above;” as such, it represented the dominion of royal authority extending to “the four corners of the world and the heavens above.”

The symbol also appears in Egyptian hieroglyphics, associated with the Goddess *Sopdet*, who was represented in the night sky by the brightest star, Sirius, the so called Dog Star in the constellation of Canis Major². Interestingly, the name Sirius is from the Greek word *seirios*, which means “burning,” and brings to mind the *Blazing Star* of Masonry.

The Pythagoreans called the Pentagram *Hugieia*, with the combined meanings of “health,” “wholeness” and “blessings.” The letters of this word were placed around the points of the pentagram. According to Iamblichus, the five-pointed star was the Pythagorean sign of recognition and held sacred as a symbol of divine perfection. The Greek Goddess of Health was *Hygeia*, or the Roman *Salus*. Both of these names appear on talismans from Greek and Roman periods, with the image of the pentagram central.

Pythagoras was a known traveler, and the fact that he appears in Indian tantrik texts by name as *Yavanacharya* (“the Greek teacher”) may explain why the Pentagram also appears in early Hindu tantrik writings and art.

To the ancient Hebrews, the Pentagram was the symbol of Truth and the five books of the Pentateuch. Ameth, the Hebrew word for Truth, is associated with humanity by the kabbalistic technique of *temurah* using the Aiq Beqr system, which utilizes letter substitution according to specific rules³. Later it will be seen that the very geometry of the Pentagram also encodes the idea of mankind and Truth.

The Pentagram found its way onto many Gnostic amulets. According to Budge

Gnostic amulets contained the pentacle which contained the ineffable name YHWH within it. More often the names Moses or Solomon were represented, Moses because he was connected with the setting up of the brazen serpent, and Solomon because his seal worked miracles.”⁴

The early Christians associated the Pentagram with the five wounds of Christ. Later kabalistic Christians would associate the name of Christ in Hebrew characters, IHShVH or *Yeheshua*, to the five points of the pentagram. This method also shows the divine Tetragrammaton associated to the four points of the star, with the fifth top point being ascribed to the Hebrew letter *shin*, which symbolized spirit and fire, or the Holy Ghost. Thus the pentagram represented the descent of the divine fire into the world.

² The star system known as Sirius is actually composed of twin stars. The brightest “star” in the night sky, Sirius has long been associated with a tradition of occult doctrine. In ancient Egypt the heliacal rising of Venus signaled the annual inundation of the Nile which provided the rich alluvial soil on the banks of the river. As such, Venus was associated with the Goddess Isis, associated with fertility and nature. It was during the “Dog Days” of summer when this phenomena occurred.

³ See Appendix 1.

⁴ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, p. 203

The Pentagram has been associated with the *Star of Bethlehem* or *Three Kings' Star*, which led the Magi to the newborn Christ. Of these ideas Pike writes:

The Star which guided [the Magi] is that same Blazing Star, the image whereof we find in all initiations. To the Alchemists it is the sign of the Quintessence; to the Magists, the Grand Arcanum; to the Kabalists, the Sacred Pentagram. The study of this Pentagram could not but lead the Magi to the knowledge of the New Name which was about to raise itself above all names, and cause all creatures capable of adoration to bend the knee.⁵

In the Arthurian legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Pentagram was emblazoned in gold on Gawain's shield, representing the five virtues of generosity, courtesy, chastity, chivalry and piety.

The symbol of the pentagram appears on many Knights Templar graves in France, as well as being intrinsic to the architecture and positioning of many chapels. One dramatic example is the mysterious shrine of Rennes du Chartres, said to be a center of Templar activity, which is situated in the center of a ring of mountains that form a nearly perfect pentagram.

The symbolism of the Western Mystery tradition has assigned the four elements of earth, air, water and fire to the four points of the pentagram, with the top point being attributed to the quintessence, or spirit. From this pattern is then attributed Kabalistic hierarchies of Archangels (Auriel for Earth, Raphael to Air, Gabriel for Water, and Michael with Fire), the Four Worlds (Assiah, Yetzirah, Briah and Atziluth), parts of the soul, and many more correspondences which are too lengthy to address in this paper.

MASONIC USAGE

The *Zelator* ritual of *S.R.I.C.F.* briefly introduces the symbolism of the Pentagram on the Altar to the new postulant:

The Five-pointed Star reminds us of the five points of felicity, which are to walk with, to intercede for, to love, to assist, and to pray for our Brethren, so as to be united with them in heart and mind.

As an emblem of the five points of felicity, the Pentagram reminds us of our duties towards our brethren of the Rose and Cross throughout the world.

Further in the ritual the subject of number symbolism is addressed, and the number five is explained as

the emblem of Health and Safety; it is also denominated the Occult number; the Pentagram was a famous talisman; it represents Spirit and the four elements.

The reference to health and safety is interesting as it is reminiscent of the Greek *hygeia* discussed earlier.

The Pentagram may be seen as symbolic of the entire course of initiation in the *S.R.I.C.F.* First Order, as the elemental degrees are easily associated with the elemental points of the Pentagram; while initiation into the Second Order represents the quintessence or fifth, top-most point of the Star. In this way, the candidate of the *S.R.I.C.F.* symbolically builds up the power of the pentagram internally as they progress through and assimilate the lessons of the degrees. Entrance to the Second Order would then represent

⁵ Albert Pike, *Morals & Dogma*, pg. 842

Adepthood, as the initiate has established the flaming star within their very heart of hearts and embodies the very essence of the Pentagram, and is a living embodiment of the Stone of the Philosophers.

Within the Craft degrees, the figure of the Pentagram may also be seen in the image of the 5 rayed Blazing Star. According to Albert Pike, the pentagram is synonymous with the Blazing Star of Masonic Lodges:

The Blazing Star in our Lodges, we have already said, represents Sirius, Anubis, or Mercury, Guardian and Guide of Souls. Our Ancient English brethren also considered it an emblem of the Sun. In the old Lectures they said: ‘The Blazing Star or Glory in the centre refers us to that Grand Luminary the Sun, which enlightens the Earth, and by its genial influence dispenses blessings to mankind. It is also said in those lectures to be an emblem of Prudence. The word *Prudentia* means, in its original and fullest signification, *Foresight*: and accordingly the Blazing Star has been regarded as an emblem of Omniscience, or the All-Seeing Eye, which to the Ancients was the Sun.’⁶

He further associates this star with the “*Divine Energy, manifested as Light, creating the Universe.*”⁷

The Masonic scholar Rex Hutchins asserts that the Pentagram

is the symbol of the Divine in man... The five-pointed star with a single point upward represents the Divine. It also symbolizes man for its five points allude to the five senses, the five members (head, arms and legs) and his five fingers on each hand, which signify the tokens that distinguish Masons.

Furthermore he writes that this figure

is the symbol of the Microcosm, the universe where humans dwell. Since the pentagon which encloses the pentagram may be formed by connecting the five points of the human body, for many centuries the symbol was also used to represent humanity in general.

Within this symbol then is a representation of humanity, and our Divine role in the Universe as co-creators of eternity.

In addition to being a central altar piece in our Rosicrucian Temples, and the Blazing Star of the Craft Lodges, the Pentagram appears as an ensign in some of the High Degrees and rites. For example, it is central on the apron of the 28th Degree of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite, *Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept*. In discussing the symbol of the pentagram in the lecture of this degree, Pike writes in *Morals & Dogma* that

in certain undertakings [the Pentagram] cannot be dispensed with. It is what is termed the Kabalistic pentacle... This carries with it the power of commanding the spirits of the elements.

A central lesson of this highly Kabalistic and Alchemical degree is that there is no death, only change. The Pentagram, symbol of humanity as the microcosm is an apt representation of this wisdom which, to one who has internalized it, may have that contempt for death which is expressed in the line from 1 Corinthians – “*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*”

⁶ Albert Pike, *Morals & Dogma*, pg. 506

⁷ *ibid*, pg. 16

In the same lecture, Pike alludes to the true meaning of this radiant symbol:

When the masters in Alchemy say that it needs but little time and expense to accomplish the works of Science. When they affirm, above all, that but a single vessel is necessary, when they speak of the Great and Single furnace, which all can use, which is within the reach of all the world, and which men possess without knowing it, they allude to the philosophical and moral Alchemy. In fact, a strong and determined will can, in a little while, attain complete independence; and we all possess that chemical instrument, the great and single athanor or furnace, which serves to separate the subtle from the gross, and the fixed from the volatile. This instrument, complete as the world, and accurate as the mathematics themselves, is designated by the Sages under the emblem of the Pentagram or Star with five points, the absolute sign of human intelligence.

It may be said that the Pentagram represents the power of the Divine Will, as manifested in Humanity, to effect conscious change. As conscious participants with the Divine Will, humanity is in the unique position of being able to be co-creators with the Divine.

Our sisters of the Eastern Star utilize a Pentagram as their primary symbol. Interestingly, their usage places the pentagram “upside down,” with two points on top and a single point facing down. According to esoteric tradition, this usage indicates the “evil” forces of darkness. The occult authority Eliphas Levi writes in *Transcendental Magic*:

The Pentagram with two horns in the ascendant represents Satan, or the goat of the Sabbath, and with the single horn in the ascendant is the sign of the Savior. It is the figure of the human body with the four members and a point representing the head; a human figure head downward naturally represents the demon, that is, intellectual subversion, disorder and folly.

As to whether the author of the Eastern Star rituals was aware of these qualities when designing the emblem of the rite is most likely unknown. A contemporary member of the Eastern Star has informed us that the explanation of the symbol she received attributes the two points as facing towards the east, providing an unobstructed channel from the altar to the Eastern dais, as well as creating a confined center or “chamber” in the east that is formed between the two extended points and the dais. All Masons would be familiar with the idea of having the path from the Altar to the East clear at all times, and this may in fact be the most probable reason for the design.

GEOMETRIC CONSIDERATIONS

Encoded into the very structure of the Pentagram is the *golden section*, a particular proportion in geometry that has been praised by artists for centuries as embodying the very divine beauty in form. Mathematically, the golden section refers to the division of a line segment into extreme and mean proportions; that is, a line is divided such that the smaller part is to the greater, as the greater is to the whole. The golden section has been used extensively in post-Hellenic architecture, as well as playing a large role in the construction of early Cathedrals. The work of Michelangelo is just one example of the use artists have made of this special proportion.

Paul Foster Case says of the golden section appearing in the pentagram:

The occult interpretation of this mathematical proportion is sometimes expressed in the maxim: ‘Nature is to man as man is to God.’ The proportion itself is often called the Golden Section of Pythagoras, and is associated with the Hermetic axiom: ‘That which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above.’

If a square is added to the longer side of a golden rectangle, a larger golden rectangle is then formed. Continuing the pattern, the golden section reveals itself to be part of the Fibonacci Series, where each number in the series is obtained by adding the previous two numbers: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13... The Fibonacci series is a naturally occurring pattern that is found in nature, such as the growth patterns of trees, the nautilus shell, pine cones, crystals, leaves and the human body. Clearly the stamp of the Great Architect is found in the world, with the wonders of creation!

The golden section of the Pentagram is approximated with the numbers 5 and 8 of the Fibonacci series. Interestingly, the dimensions of the Rosicrucian Vault of C.R. as described in the core document the *Fama Fraternitatis* are said to be 8 feet tall and 5 feet wide. This mysterious vault was said to be a “compendium of the universe,” each wall illustrated with Kabalistic and Hermetic symbols.

OCCULT PROPERTIES

The Pentagram has a long history of occult use. It was by use of a poorly constructed Pentagram that Mephistopheles was able to manifest in the circle of Faust! Magical grimoires of the western esoteric tradition are replete with examples of pentagrams being used as protective and evocatory talismans, or as the seals of circles of the Art which were traced on the floor of the ritual chamber. Literally thousands of examples are extant from the works of Trithemius, Dr. John Dee, Heinrich Agrippa, Kircher, Bruno, and many others, which show the hermetic and kabalistic applications of the Pentagram in ceremonial ritual use.

Perhaps one of the most evocative descriptions of the occult powers of this symbol comes from the magician Eliphas Levi (Alphonse Louis Constant), who writes of the Pentagram in his book *Transcendental Magic*:

The Pentagram expresses the mind's domination over the elements and it is by this sign that we bind the demons of the air, the spirits of fire, the spectres of water, and the ghosts of earth. It is the Star of the Magi, the burning star of the Gnostic schools, the sign of intellectual omnipotence and autocracy. Its complete comprehension is the key of two worlds--it is absolute natural philosophy and natural science. Its use, however, is most dangerous to operators who do not completely and perfectly understand it. All mysteries of magic, all symbols of the gnosis, all figures of occultism, all Qabalistic keys of prophecy, are resumed in the sign of the Pentagram, which Paracelsus proclaims to be the greatest and most potent of all.

[...] this absolute sign, this sign as old or as older than history, should and must actually exercise an incalculable influence on souls disengaged from their material envelope. Armed therewith and suitably disposed, we can behold infinity through the medium of that faculty which is as the Soul's Eye, and can cause ourselves to be served by legions of angels and demon hordes. The empire of the Will over the Astral Light which is the physical soul of the four elements, is represented in magic by the Pentagram.

If it be asked how a sign can exercise that immense power over spirits which is claimed for the Pentagram, we inquire in turn why the Christian world bows before the sign of the cross. The sign by itself is nothing, it derives strength from the doctrine which it resumes, and of which it is the Logos. Now, a sign which epitomizes by expression all the occult forces of Nature, which has always manifested to the elementary and other spirits a power superior to their own, naturally strikes them with fear and respect, and enforces their obedience by the empire of knowledge and will over ignorance and weakness.

The points of the pentagram are often associated with the five-fold name of the Christ, IHShVH or *Yeheshua*. Paul Foster Case describes this:

The letters at the five points of the pentagram are the Roman characters corresponding to Yod, Heh, Shin, Vau and Heh. They are the letters which spell the divine name IHVH, Jehovah, with the 'holy letter,' Shin, symbol of the Holy Spirit, placed between the first two and last two letters, thus: I H Sh V H. This is the occult and Rosicrucian spelling of the name Yeheshua, or Jesus... 'It is the symbol of the Word made flesh.' [...] every pentagram ... symbolizes the mystical name IHShVH...⁸

CONCLUSION

As one of the most powerful talismans of antiquity, the Pentagram shows the divine nature of mankind as intermediaries between God and the lower orders of being. A symbol of health and protection, it has been used by countless cultures on charms, in magical grimoires, carved on temples and used in magical and meditative practices.

Embodied within this geometric figure are the codes which signify the very Vault of the Rosicrucian Adepts; as well as signs showing where the true vault lies, centered in that internal sanctuary of the heart, the Secret Temple of the Master.

Signifying man's dominion over the elements, the pentagram suggests that humanity partakes of its Creators essence and is in fact a co-heir of eternity, working with the Deity as living temples of the Most High God.

In our Rosicrucian Temples, the Pentagram is also reminder of the divine blessings of IHShVH and the Victory on the Cross. In this sense, the Pentagram represents the Rose Cross Lamén, with a blooming Red Rose of Victory and Divine Will upon the Golden Calvary Cross of the elements which are transformed through the alembic of our hearts into Alchemical Gold of the Sun.

The Pentagram represents the agency of Divine Will, the radiant inexhaustible Will of the Christos, flowing forth endlessly through humanity. That same Divine power which Psalm 91 alludes to, and from which the protection of the Divine is granted

⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

¹¹ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

¹² They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

¹³ Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

¹⁴ Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

¹⁵ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.\

-- Psalm 91

⁸ For an excellent kabbalistic study of the Name IHShVH, see *The Name of Names* by Paul Foster Case.

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Appendix I:

Aiq Bekar (The Kabalah of Nine Chambers)

The system of temurah known as Aiq Bekar divides the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet into a grid of 9 chambers with their numerical values:

Sh	L	G	R	K	B	Q	Y	A
300	30	3	200	20	2	100	10	1
M	S	V	K	N	H	Th	M	D
600	60	6	500	50	5	400	40	4
Tz	Tz	T	P	P	Ch	N	O	Z
900	90	9	800	80	8	700	70	7

This grid is then used as the template from which to permutate words, which are either expanded or minimized.

In Hebrew, the word for man is ADM, *adam*. This is not an individual man, rather it represents humanity as a whole, mankind. The Hebrew letters enumerate to the number 45.

Using the Aiq Bekar grid, the word ADM may be permuted into the word AMTh (*emeth*), which means Truth and has the value of 441.

Using this system, the Kabalah indicates that Man embodies Truth, and that Truth is in fact in Man.

Appendix II:

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram

While its origins are now most likely lost in the mists of obscurity and time, one of the more well known applications of the Pentagram is in the ritual of the Pentagram popularized by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the occult organization founded in the 19th century by high ranking members of the S.R.I.A.

Described by Israel Regardie as a “spiritual tonic” and the very “stone of the philosophers,” the Ritual of the Pentagram has been used in one form or another by various individuals and groups for prayer, spiritual attainment, meditation, and the ritual acts of banishing and invoking.

Take a steel dagger in the right hand. Face East.

Touch thy forehead
and say ATEH (*Thou art*)

Touch thy breast
and say MALKUTH (*the Kingdom*)

Touch thy right shoulder
and say VE-GEBURAH (*and the Power*)

Touch thy left shoulder
and say VE-GEDULAH (*and the Glory*)

Clasp thy hands before thee
and say LE-OLAM (*for ever*)

Dagger between fingers, point up
and say AMEN.

Make in the Air toward the East the invoking PENTAGRAM as shown and, bringing the point of the dagger to the centre of the Pentagram, vibrate the DEITY NAME — YOD HE VAU HE — imagining that your voice carries forward to the East of the Universe.

Holding the dagger out before you, go to the South, make the Pentagram and vibrate similarly the deity name — ADONAI.

Go to the West, make the Pentagram and vibrate EHIEH.

Go to the North, make the Pentagram and vibrate AGLA.

Return to the East and complete your circle by bringing the dagger point to the centre of the first Pentagram.

Stand with arms outstretched in the form of a cross and say:—

Invoking



Banishing



BEFORE ME	RAPHAEL
BEHIND ME	GABRIEL
AT MY RIGHT HAND	MICHAEL
AT MY LEFT HAND	AURIEL
BEFORE ME FLAMES THE PENTAGRAM —	
BEHIND ME SHINES THE SIX-RAYED STAR	

Again make the Qabalistic Cross as directed above, saying ATEH, etc.

For Banishing use the same Ritual, but reversing the direction of the lines of the Pentagram.

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Additional notes on the synodic period of Venus were obtained from the website of the Masonic Grand Lodge of British Columbia: <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/venus.html>