

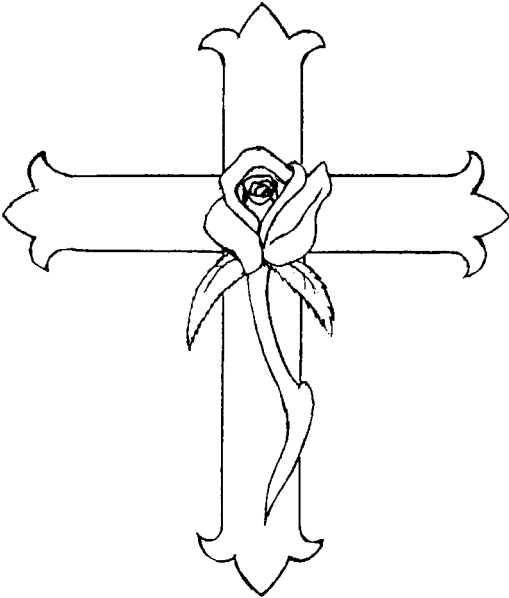
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# Symbolism of the Banners

R . R . E T A . C .

ZELATOR ADEPTUS MINOR

⑤=⑥

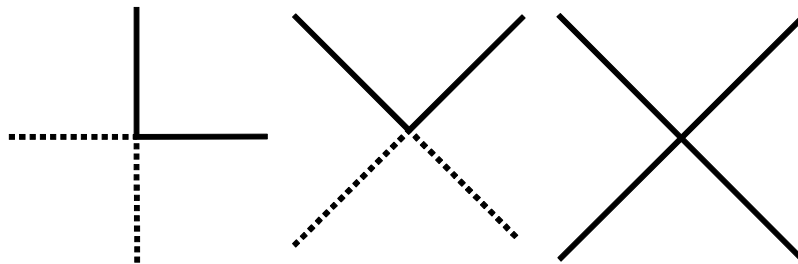


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As the Neophyte goes through his initiation, he is told by the Hieres to make the saluting sign to the Banner of the East. The banners change to different positions with each grade initiation. Yet, the true symbolism of the banners remains hidden and unknown until the candidate reaches the grade of 5=6. The mystical symbolism of the banners can only be fully recognized when a greater understanding of the minor symbols are comprehended. The banners are composed of specific arrangements of the cross and the triangle. On the Banner of the East, the triangles come together in the form of a hexagram, thus containing the power of the equilibrium while maintaining their individual meaning.

So first, as brethren of the Fraternity, we shall look at various arrangements of those simple geometrical figures and their mystical meanings. The first symbol would be that of the cross. This symbol is upheld very highly by modern Christianity. A cross is a figure made by two lines bisecting each other. When at right angles, it is the Calvary Cross or also called, the Crux Simplex. Unknown to many modern Christians, the symbol of the cross in its various shapes is far older than that of the Christian era. For it was in use amongst the pagans of Western Asia and Europe many centuries before the death of Christ. As such, to many ancient cultures, it is not a symbol of sacrifice, but still remains as a solar symbol. This also includes the ankh, which many attribute to the planet C, but because the planet is so close to the A it contains many of its qualities.

The oldest example of such usage can be found during the Kassite period between 1746-1171 BC., of an equilateral cross on a cylinder where a sun god was seated. It was also found in many of the Assyrian artifacts in America before the arrival of Columbus. Even though these crosses may not have meant crucifixion, we still see that it contains a very similar element, for it also means, victory, heaven, A, life, etc.. Through the understanding of the Mysteries, we find that only through sacrifice can all of these be obtained. It almost could be said that the symbolism of the crucifixion left the last key to the formula of the cross or LVX. The formula is victory, life = sacrifice of the lower unto the Higher. The word LVX could almost be said to contain within it the power of the cross.



Now, in taking a look at the banners, notice the use of two forms of the cross. The most visible is the Calvary Cross. In the womb of the Hexagram, we notice the appearance of a three-armed cross, the T Cross, or the Crux Commissa. The T Cross was found in history in the catacombs of Rome and was given many names like "Anticipatory Cross," or "Type Cross," and the "Cross of the Old Testament." It represents in its shape a cross-headed yoke or gibbet, and by others, the Hammer of Thor. In looking at its origin, it could be said that it is Phoenician or Egyptian. For the

bottom of the ankh, the Egyptian symbol of Life, is a ⚡ Cross. It could be said to be the male part of the ankh symbol. In contemplating the Christian origin of the ⚡ cross, we need to look in Ezekiel. (ix. 4), for we read that the prophet was commanded by God to go through Jerusalem and to "set a mark upon the foreheads" of certain men, presumably as a sign of their exemption from judgment. The Hebrew word which is translated as "mark" is Tau and some have identified the sign tau with the ⚡ cross. Tertullian, in commenting on the passage, says of the sign, "Ipsa enim litera Graecorum ⚡, nostra autem species crucis (Adversus Marcian iii.22)." We also see a view that the mark made with the blood of the paschal lamb on the houses of the Israelites before they left Egypt was the ⚡ Cross (Exodus xii. 7).

We have now to consider the Christian Cross or also known as the Calvary Cross. The New Testament makes it quite certain that Christ was not crucified on a single stake (Crux Simplex), but on a patibulum or bigot formed of two bars of wood with one fastened across the other. Some have held the view that he was nailed to the cross whilst it lay on the ground, and that the cross was then lifted up and set upright. Another view is that he was made to ascend a ladder of nine steps, and was then nailed to the cross. This ladder is represented in some medieval pictures of the crucifixion. From the 12th century onward, the ladder appears on wood carvings and in stained glass with the other passion symbols: vix., the dice, the seamless robe, the cock, the spear, the sword, the thirty pieces of silver, the pincers, the three nails, the hammer, the pillar of scourging, the scourge, the reed, the sponge, the vessel of vinegar, and the crown of thorns. Four forms of the cross were used in the early centuries of our era. The Greek Cross with the four arms being equal in length, the Latin Cross (Crux Immissa or Crux Capitata) in which the lower limb is longer than each of the others, the Crux Decussata, or St. Andre's Cross, and the Crux Commissa or the ⚡ Cross. At the same time, we find that the so-called monogram of Christ was in general use among Christians.

The Latin Cross was best known and most used because the cross on which Christ was crucified is believed to have been of this form. The Latin Cross is also known as the Cross of Calvary and the Passion Cross. The cross, that is sometimes seen in the hands of the risen Lord, is known as the Cross of the Resurrection, and a flag or banner is usually attached to it. Sometimes the cross has the form of a tree, or of a series of branches of trees. Some pictures of the crucifixion suggest that each of the two thieves suffered on the ⚡ Cross or on trees.

Now, having had a quick idea of the historic development of the cross through the ages, we need to regard its mystical symbolism. In looking at the Tree of Life, we notice that on the higher levels, the sorrow of **בִּינָה** is the knowledge and understanding of the great cosmic factors behind the incarnation of man and also of Christ. It is the realization and revelation of the Great Mother herself. An awareness of this condition can be made by building the picture of the crucifixion with Our Lady and St. John on either side of the cross. The skies are black, and the crucifixion takes place between earth and sky in some strange condition of space. Mary herself steps forward as if to take on herself the weight of the symbolism, while overshadowing all is Tzaphkiel, the Archangel of **בִּינָה**. The picture is filled with deep crimson, black, dark brown and the gray flecked pink of the sephirotic colors. This image should lead to the understanding

of the whole manifested Universe as a form encompassing pure cosmic force. A gigantic cross upon which this force is crucified. The whole of life is lived under the shadow of this cross. This is the primary Cross of Life of which the Cross of Golgotha is a lesser manifestation; a shadow cast by the Great Shadow.

Having taken a look at Mary as a representation of the Feminine Principle of the Shekinah in the Christian belief, let's take a look at מלכות, for מלכות and בינה have various manifestations of Mary, Isis in common. מלכות, the Inferior Mother, the Queen, the Bride, the Virgin, have the common denominator of femininity. This attribution is obvious when one considers that מלכות is receptive to all the higher emanations of the Tree. The Queen and the Bride are references to the relation of מלכות to תפארת, the King, and the Lesser Countenance, the harmony of which must become manifest in מלכות, which is also the Cross of Dense Matter upon which the ☩ is crucified: Thus, we have a further link with תפארת in the mysteries of the crucifixion.

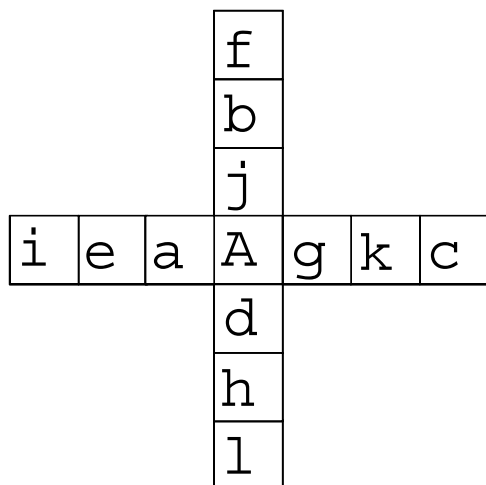
Emerging out of מלכות upward is the thirty-second path connecting with יסוד. The letter attributed to the thirty-second path is ת, meaning a cross. The cross is not only the Cross of Calvary but the Equal-Armed Cross and the ת Cross. The simple cross of equal arms is the point, a symbol of ☩ and Light, extended in four directions; Light in Extension. It is also the Cross of the Elements, the elements being the reflection in מלכות of the Four Holy Living Creatures in בתר which appears at the corners of the Tarot card the Universe card. The ת Cross is a three-armed cross, that is, a cross without the upper bar, and it is the virile part of the Egyptian ankh, the symbol of Life. It also signifies two forces impacting on a higher level and producing a form on a denser level. All form is built up of opposing higher forces locked together. The shape of the letter ת suggests the letter ר, meaning head, but with a downward extension ending with the virile י. Thus, it can signify the ☩, or head ( a בתר symbol ), sending its forces downward into dense manifestation. The downward projection could also be linked to an inverted letter ו, meaning a nail. This suggests the ☩ nailed to the Cross of Matter putting it in rather grim terms, but terms which serve to show the parallel between cosmic and Christian symbolism. Being upside down, as the ו is, it is a symbol of sacrifice or reflection-exemplified for example in the Tarot card the Hanged Man. The planetary sign of the path of ת, is ♄, a sign composed of the Cross and the Moon, and thus apt for linking מלכות and יסוד.

The full descent of the ☩ into matter is exemplified by the crucifixion, the beautiful naked hermaphrodite of יסוד on the ת or cross of the thirty-second path. On the card we notice the female figure naked, except for a כ-shaped scarf, dancing within a wreathed oval. Her attitude, with arms extended downwards and outwards, and her legs forming a cross, suggests the triangle over a cross, the sign of ♄.

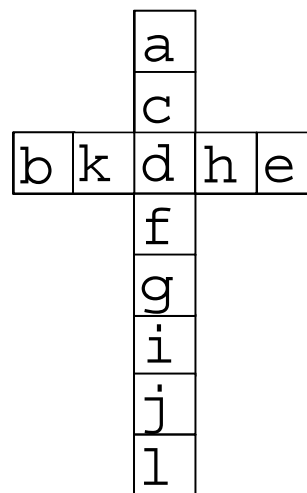
Having taken a look at correspondences of the cross with the Feminine Principle of both ה and ה final, we need to look at ו. ו is the letter attributed to the world of יצירה, and to the element of ♄, and the sephira of תפארת. One of the most important symbols of תפארת is the cross, whether in its form of the Calvary Cross of Black with three black

steps leading up to it, or the Gold Equal Armed Cross with a rose of red blooming at its center. The Calvary Cross represents the way of self sacrifice for the benefit of others, and it is the only way by which man can return to his spiritual home. As our Lord said: "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." Only after the way of the cross has been accepted and experienced can come the knowledge of the Rose Cross, when the Rose of the Spirit blooms on the Universal Cross of Manifestation in dense matter. In this latter symbol, the vision of the harmony of things and the mysteries of the crucifixion are one. On the Calvary Cross is the man sacrificed as a separate being; on the Rose Cross is the Spirit of man in harmony with the whole Universe, including the densest manifestation. The principle behind the Calvary Cross is that the Shower of the Way descended into the corruption of human existence on Earth and showed the formula of redemption. The principle behind the Rose Cross is that the Shower of the Way remained out of manifestation holding the perfect pattern of what man should be, untainted by corruption. Had there been no fall of man, the Calvary Cross would have been unnecessary, there would have been no illusion of separateness, lack of brotherhood and mutual service between men. Alchemically speaking, the cross is the hieroglyph of the crucible, which used to be called in French Cruzol, Crucible and Croiset. Indeed it is in the crucible that the first matter suffers the Passion, like Christ himself. It is in the crucible that it dies to be revived, purified, spiritualized and transformed.

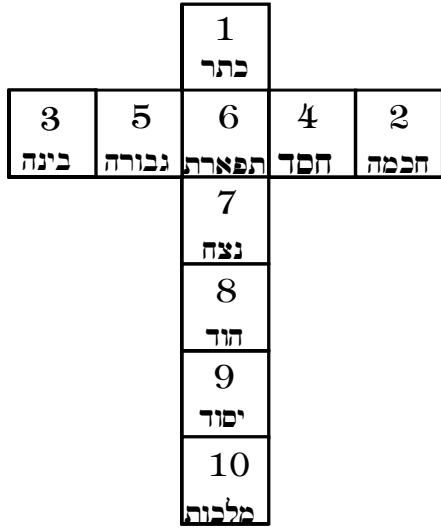
Through the grades of initiation in the Hermetic Order of The Golden Dawn International, we notice variable usage of the Calvary Cross with various number of squares. These crosses have varied meanings than those on the banners, but their meaning allows a deeper understanding. Thus, here is a list:



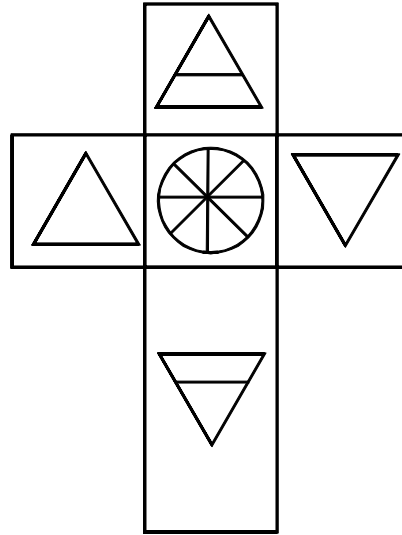
**THE GREEK CROSS OF  
THIRTEEN SQUARES**



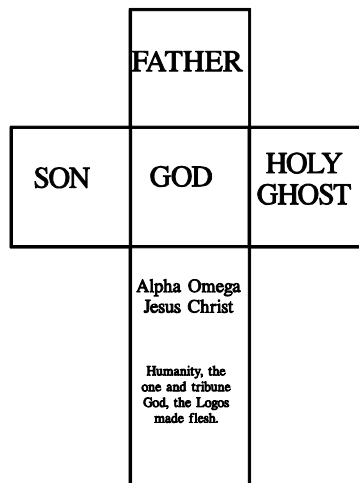
**CALVARY CROSS OF  
TWELVE SQUARES**



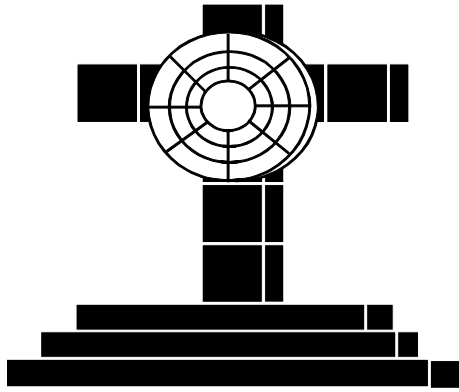
CALVARY CROSS OF  
TEN SQUARES



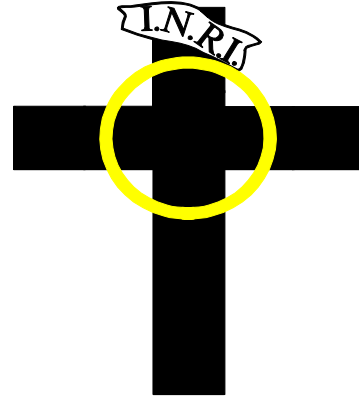
CALVARY CROSS OF  
SIX SQUARES



TRINITY ON THE  
CALVARY CROSS  
OF SIX SQUARES



**CROSS OF  
VICTORY**

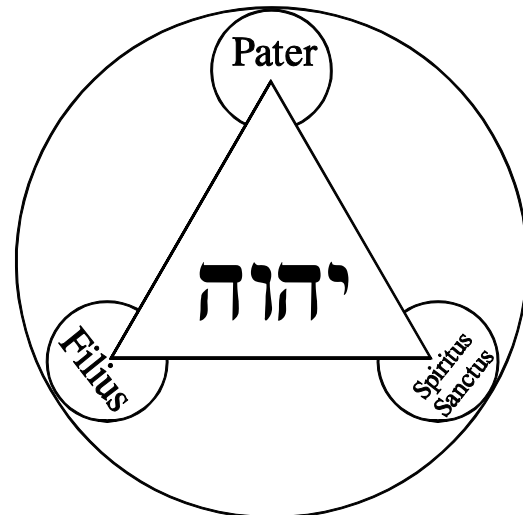


**CROSS OF  
OBLIGATION**

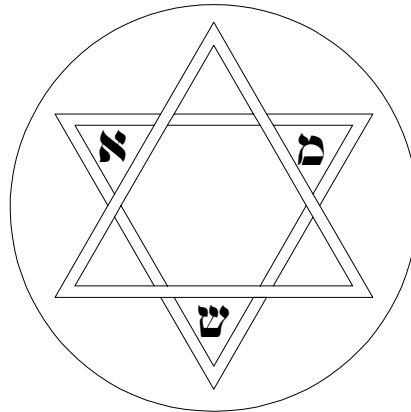
### **Triangle and the Hexagram**

Taking a look at the symbology of the triangles on the banners, we notice that they also represent various Rosicrucian concepts. These concepts represent the trinity of creation in various forms. Also, they represent a Microcosmic/Macrocosmic relationship. The various diagrams below provide a simple example of those concepts.

"For I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,' saith the Lord, God who liveth in Light, since none can come to him, or near him."



This is the manifestation of the three Mother Letters in the equilibrium of the hexagram, as could also be seen on the Banner of the East with  $\triangle$  represented by the red triangle,  $\nabla$  by the blue triangle, and  $\triangle$  by the Golden Cross of תפארת.



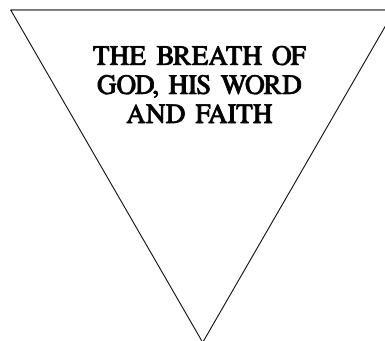
In looking at the triangles and the Microcosmic and Macrocosmic Man, see the following:

"O man, know God and thyself, so thou mayest know what is in Heaven and on earth."

What God was before the beginning in eternity:

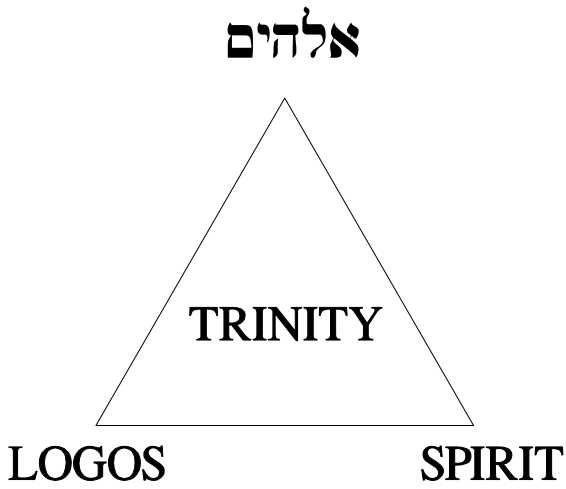


What man was before the beginning in eternity:

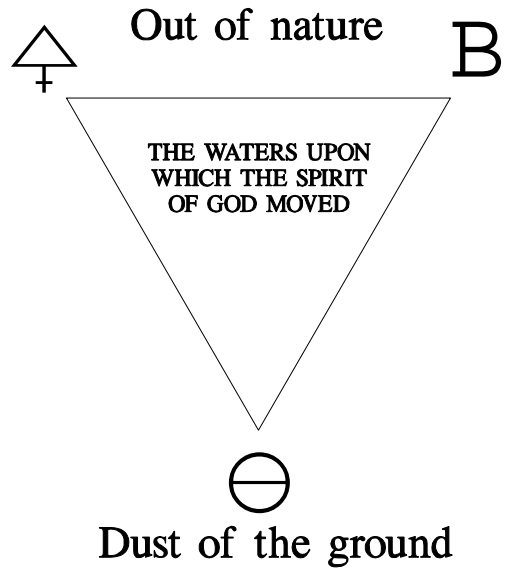




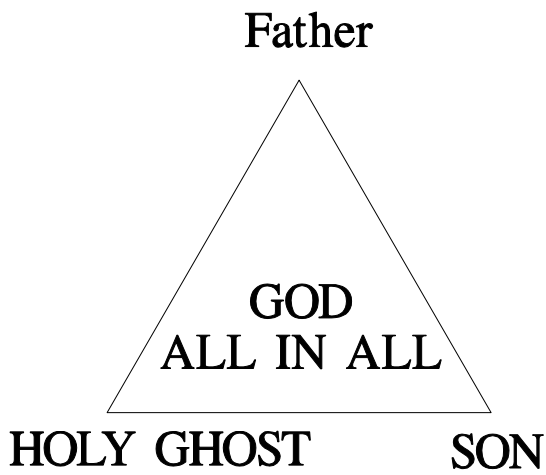
What God was in the beginning:



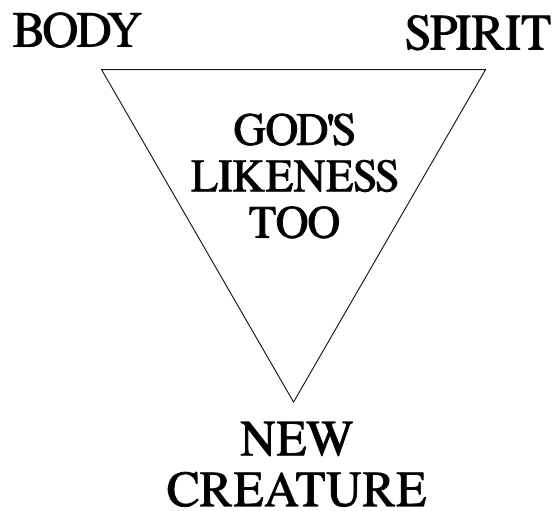
What man was in the beginning:



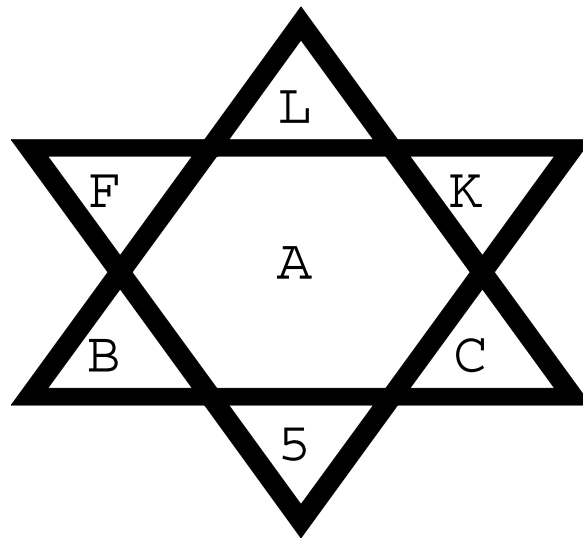
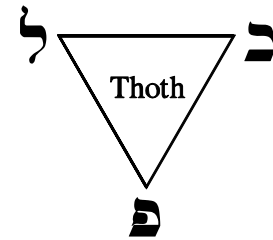
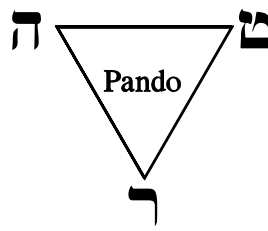
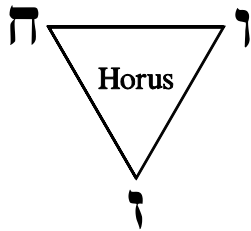
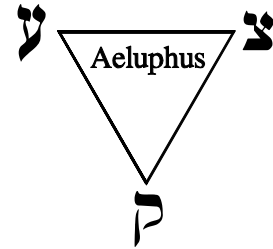
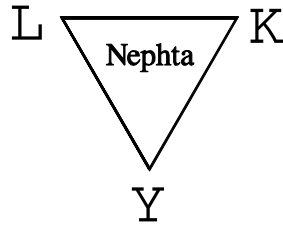
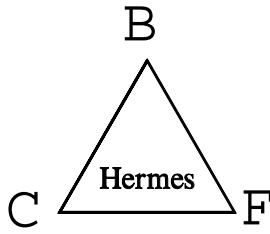
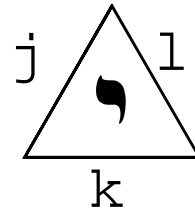
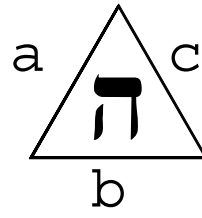
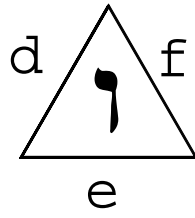
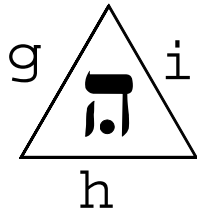
What God is after time:



What man is after time:



Some of the arrangement extracted from the *Bembine Tablet* by W. W. Westcott.



**PLANETS ON  
THE HEXAGRAM**

# ALCHEMICAL TRIANGLES

## AND THE HEXAGRAMS

4 Elements.	3 Beginnings.	2 Seeds.	1 Fruit.
4. Fire  1 3. Water  2 2. Air  3 1. Earth  4	Sulphur   1 Salt   2 Mercury  B 3	Male Sperma 2. Sem. 2. Female	Natures becomes 1.  Tincture  Supernatural 2.
About God	Nature	Metals	the Art.
God Father	Son	Holy Ghost	Christian

### Symbolism of the Banner of the East

The field of the Banner of the East is white, the color of Light and purity. The Calvary Cross of Six Squares is the number six of **תפארת**, the Yellow Cross of Solar Gold, and the cubical stone, bearing in its center the sacred **ת** of Life, and having bound together upon it the form of the Macrocosmic Hexagram, the red triangle of  $\triangle$  and the blue triangle of  $\nabla$  -- "the **רוח אלהים** and the Waters of Creation."

In addition to this explanation, it affirms the mode of action employed by the Divine Light in its operation by the forces of Nature. Upon it is the symbol of the

Macrocosm so colored as to affirm the action of the  $\triangle$  of the  $\otimes$  through the Waters of Creation under the harmony of the Golden Cross of the Reconciler. Within the center of the Hexagram is a  $\text{⚡}$  Cross in white to represent its action as a triad; and the whole is placed on a white field representing the ocean of the **אֵין סוּף אֹר**. The banner is suspended from a gold colored bar by red cords, and the pole and base should be white. The base represents the purity of the foundation -- the shaft, the purified will directed to the Higher. The golden cross-bar is that whereon the manifested law of perfection rests; the banner itself, the perfect law of the Universe, the red cords and tassels, the Divine self-enunciation, whose trials and sufferings form, as it were, the ornament of the completed Work. The whole represents the ascent of the initiate into perfect knowledge of the Light. Therefore, in the address of the Hieres, the Neophyte hears, "Even the Banner of the East sinks in adoration before Him," as though that symbol, great and potent though it be, lowers itself before the Vast and Mighty One.

## Symbolism of the Banner of the West

On the Banner of the West, the White Triangle refers to the three paths connecting **מַלְכוּת** with the other sephiroth; while the Red Cross is the Hidden Knowledge of the Divine Nature which is to be obtained through their aid. The cross and triangle together represent Life and Light.

In addition to this explanation from the Zelator grade, it represents eternally the possibility of rescuing the evil. But in it, the **תַּפְאֵרֶת** Cross is placed within the White Triangle of the Supernals as thereby representing that sacrifice made only unto the Higher. The Red Cross is bordered with gold in this instance, to represent the perfect metal obtained in and through the darkness of putrefaction. Black is its field which thus represents the Darkness and Ignorance of the Outer, while the white triangle is again the Light which shineth in the Darkness but which is not comprehended thereby. Therefore, is the Banner of the West the symbol of twilight -- as it were the equation of Light and Darkness. The pole and the base are black to represent that even in the Depths of Evil can that symbol stand. The cord is black, but the transverse bar and the lance-point may be golden or brass and the tassels scarlet as in the case of the Banner of the East, and for the same reasons.

The Banner of the West, when it changes its position in the Temple, represents that which bars and threatens, and demands fresh sacrifice ere the path leading to the Higher be attained.

## Building the Banners of the East and West

The banners are a difficult craft project because of the sharp corners required on some pieces. Their preparation demands both sewing experience and a rather meticulous sense for detail.

Material for the banners should be very thin. It is almost impossible to fold thick cottons or other fabrics into these patterns; they invariably appear lumpy and crude. The ideal fabric, from the standpoints of availability of colors, cost and ease of construction, are acetates intended as lining materials.

To some extent, this should be considered a "cut and paste" project. Iron-on seam binding should be used to hold the pieces firmly in place before they are overstitched. It is essential that the pieces be held completely flat before final sewing if a machine is used. Otherwise, fabrics may pull to one side or the other creating uneven lines.

The following is a technique for sewing a cross. In the absence of iron-on seam binding, the panels should be basted (large temporary stitches) to the background panel.

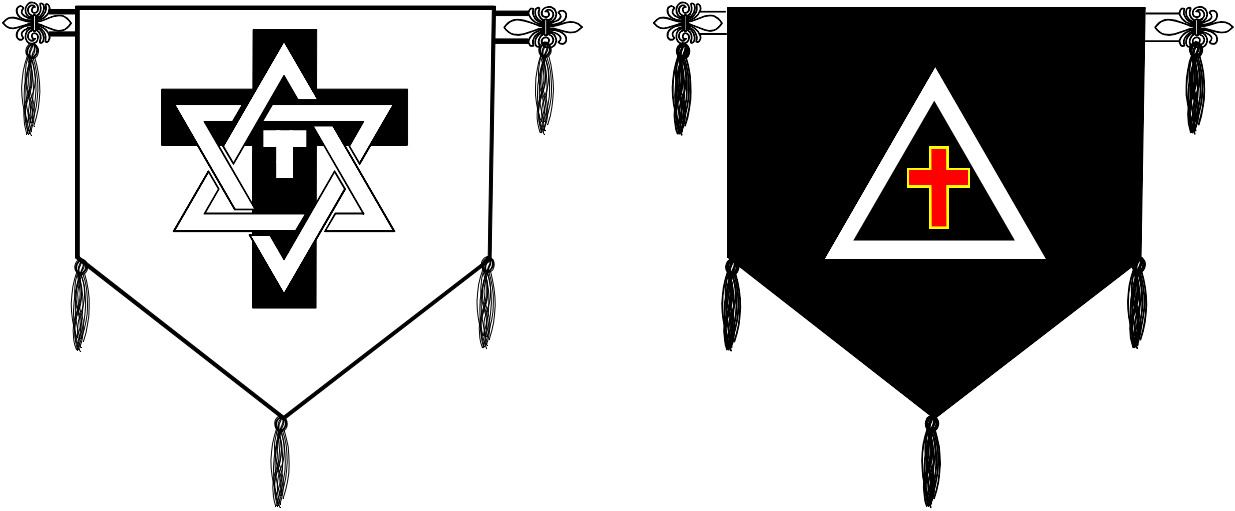
- 1) Iron the fabric, and on the back of it draw a cross. A soft black pencil will generally show up, even on black fabrics. A white chalk pencil available at fabric stores may also be used. Lines must be measured carefully.
- 2) Cut around the outside of the cross, leaving a border of approximately 3/8 inch.
- 3) Cut the corners and central angles as shown in the illustration.
- 4) Apply a very small drop of white glue at each inner or outer corner point. This will keep the fabric from fraying at the point where there is nothing to be folded over.
- 5) With a steam iron, fold back the edges of the cross. Some materials will hold such an edge easily, but others may require tacking with a small strip of the seam binding.
- 6) Place the cross on the background material, with strips of seam binding underneath. Cover it with a cloth and press with a hot iron.
- 7) Finally, overstretch around all of the edges, keeping the lines as straight as possible.

## **Hanging the Banners**

Both banners have red tassels (available in most fabric stores) at the corners, and are hung from a gold bar. On the black banner, the bar is suspended from a black cord, and on the white banner the cord is red. The simplest way to suspend the banners is to attach them with heavy thread. In those illustrated, a metallic gold embroidery thread is used. The cross bars here are nothing more than simple 3/4 inch dowel rods, with small wooden drawer pulls at the ends.

The Golden Dawn papers state merely that the stand for the Banner of the East should be white, and that of the Banner of the West black. Very simple stands can be

made of round or square wood mounted on a base plate. Twisted columns of the stands are a commercially available decorative dowel often used as curtain rods. The finials are actually ready-cut in many hardware and lumber stores. The banner cord is suspended from another drawer pull.



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