

Pentagrams (meaning, history, etc.)

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Pentagram

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's Cross, the Pentalpha, the Witch's Foot, the Devil's 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 magickal and symbolic meaning.

The Pentagram through History.

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 3500BC at Ur of the Chaldees in Ancient Mesopotamia where it was symbolic of imperial power.
- * 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).
- * In Ancient Greece, it was called the Pentalpha, being geometrically composed of five A's. Unlike earlier civilisations, 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).
- * To the Gnostics, the pentagram was the 'Blazing Star'.
- * For the Druids, it was a symbol of Godhead.
- * In Egypt, it was a symbol of the 'underground womb'.

- * The Pagan Celts ascribed the pentagram to the underground goddess Morrigan.
- * Medieval Christians attributed the pentagram to the Five Wounds of Christ.
- * The Christian Emperor Constantine I used the pentagram, together with the chi-rho symbol in his seal and amulet.
- * In the legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the pentagram was Sir Gawain's glyph, inscribed in gold on his shield, symbolising the five knightly virtues.
- * In Medieval times, the 'Endless Knot' was a symbol of Truth and was a protection against demons. It was used as personal protection and to guard windows and doors.
- * The pentagram with one point upwards symbolised summer; with two points upwards, it was a sign for winter.

+ During the long period of the Inquisition, the pentagram was seen to symbolise a Goat's Head. In the purge on witches, the horned god Pan became equated with the Devil (a Christian concept) and the pentagram, for the first time in history became a symbol of 'evil' and was called the Witch's Foot.

- * In the emergence of Hermeticism, graphical symbolism became very important. The concept of the microcosmic world of Man as analogous to the macrocosm, the greater universe of spirit and elemental matter is a part of traditional occult teaching in both western and eastern philosophies. "As above, so below"; The pentagram, the 'Star of the Microcosm', symbolised 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; indeed an illustration attributed to Agrippa or to Tycho Brae (1582) illustrates the similarity of proportion in this image, showing the five planets and the moon at the centre point - the genitalia. There are other illustrations of the period by Robert Fludd and Leonardo da Vinci showing geometrical 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. - [Quintessence]

- * In Freemasonry, Man as Microprosopus was associated with the

five-pointed Seal of Solomon. 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 womens' branch of freemasonry uses the five pointed 'Eastern Star' as its emblem. Each point commemorates a heroine of biblical lore.

+ No graphical illustration of any association of the pentagram with evil appears until the nineteenth century. Eliphas Levi illustrates the upright pentagram of microcosmic man beside an inverted pentagram with the goat's head of Baphomet.

In ritual magick the sign has long been used as a ritual flourish of the athame to symbolise invoking or banishing in respect to elemental associations.

* 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 symbolised third degree initiation.

* The pentagram was also inscribed on the altar pentacle, it's points symbolising the three aspects of the Goddess plus the two aspects of the God.

* It was not until the late 1960's that the pentagram again became an amuletic symbol to be worn and has since then 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 !

Nevertheless, the potency of a symbol has more to do with its associations and its commonality than with its antiquity and the pentagram today is ubiquitous amongst neo-pagans.

Symbolic Meanings of the Pentagram.

* 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).

- * The number 5 is associated with Mars. It signifies severity, conflict and harmony through conflict.
 - * In Christianity, five were the wounds of Christ on the cross.
 - * There are five pillars of the Muslim faith and five daily times of prayer.
 - * 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.
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The number 5 is prime. The simplest star - the pentagram- requires five lines to draw and it is unicursal; it is a continuous loop.

Expressing the saying "Every man and every woman is a star", we can juxtapose Man on a pentagram with head and four limbs at the points and the genitalia exactly central. This is Man in microcosm, symbolising our place in the Macrocosm or universe and the Hermetic/Tantric philosophy of associativity - "As above, so below".

The geometric proportions of the regular pentagram are those of the Golden Section.

- * The Golden Proportion is one beloved of artists since Renaissance times, being those of a rectangle considered most pleasing in proportion. Here, the ratio of the lengths of the two sides is equal to the ratio of the longer side to the sum of the two sides.
Or :
$$a/b = b/a+b = a+b/a+2b = a+2b/2a+3b = 2a+3b/3a+5b \dots \text{etc.}$$
- * If a square is added to the long side of a golden rectangle, a larger golden rectangle is formed. Continuing this progression forms the basis for a nautilus spiral.
- * The ratio of the distance between two points of a pentagram to its total width is in the golden proportion, as is the ratio of the height above the horizontal bar to that below, as is the ratio of a central part of a line to the outer part.
- * This ratio forms the foundation of the Fibonacci series of numbers 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89,144, etc where each number is formed by adding the previous two numbers.
- * The Fibonacci series is much found in nature in the pattern arrangement of flower heads and leaves and many flower heads and

fruits themselves exhibit a fivefold symmetry.

- * The pentagram has long been believed to be a potent protection against evil, a symbol of conflict that shields the wearer and the home.
- * The pentagram has five spiked wards and a womb shaped defensive, protective pentagon at the centre.
- * There are five elements, four of matter (earth, air, fire and water) and THE quintessential - spirit. These may be arrayed around the pentagram's points.
 - + The word 'quintessential' derives from this fifth element - the spirit.
- * Single point upwards signifies the spirit ruling matter (mind ruling limbs); is a symbol of rightness. With two points up and one (spirit) downwards, subservient, the emphasis is on the carnal nature of Man.
- * Tracing a path around the pentagram, the elements are placed in order of density - spirit (or aether), fire, air, water, earth. Earth and fire are basal, fixed; air and water are free, flowing.
- * These point attributions are used in ritually inscribing, as a flourish of the hands or the athame, different forms of pentagram for invoking or banishing (grounding) each of the elementals according to the nature of the ritual. The line traces as illustrated for earth (the last stroke is optional).

Another way of seeing this path is as Man's spiritual journey through evolution. The spark of Life descending from God, the divine source of life to the simplest embryonic form (earth), rising to flow (water - air) on our plane of existence (compare with the intonation of the AUM mantra), then again descending to the fire of purification before again rising as a divine spark to find again his spiritual source.

- * The pentagram may be shown as an interlaced line symbolic of the web-weaving power of magick. The descending spirit-earth line may pass under (male) or over (female) the water-air line to give two slightly differing forms.
- * A pentagram may be open, without a surrounding circle. This is the active form symbolising an outgoing of oneself, prepared for conflict, aware, active. (One wearing an open pentagram must be physically aware of the danger of sharp points sticking in their skin from time to time !)
- * A circle around a pentagram contains and protects. It is the

passive form implying spiritual containment of the magic circle.
The circle also represents eternity and infinity.

Inverted Pentagram

- * The pentagram may be inverted with one point down. The implication is of spirit subservient to matter, of man subservient to his carnal desires.
- * The inverted pentagram has come to be seen by many pagans as representing the dark side and it is abhorred as an evil symbol. Fundamental christians, indeed, see any form of pentagram as such.
- * However, these are recent developments and the inverted pentagram is the symbol of Gardnerian second degree initiation, representing the need of the witch to learn to face the darkness within so that it may not later rise up to take control.

- * The centre of a pentagram implies a sixth formative element - love/will which controls from within, ruling matter and spirit by Will and the controlled magickal direction of sexual energies. This is another lesson of initiation.

In physical form, the pentagram may be worn as an amulet - as jewellery - pendant, ring, earrings, buckle, etc....

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- The earliest recorded use of the pentagram as a mystical symbol was by the Gnostics, who called it the Blazing Star. It was also considered by Christians during the middle ages to be a symbol of the Five Wounds of Christ, and used as a protective glyph, generally as a variation on the Seal of Solomon (a Star of David within a circle).

 - The association of the pentagram with non-Christian belief, and its modern "elemental" analysis, were evidently introduced during the revival of occultism in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Masons and similar groups such as the OTO took it up--for example, A.E. Waite is the person who introduced the symbol into the Tarot deck, replacing the traditional suit of Coins.

 - The use of the "inverted" pentagram to denote evil is a quite recent usage, and first appears in the works of Eliphas Levi. He is also the source of the "goat's head" glyph. Before this, neither orientation had evil connotations per se.

- The modern pagan movement picked up the pentagram as part of a general borrowing from earlier "occult" usage, and Wicca in particular has taken it up as an explicit denotational symbol, similar to the cross, the Thor's hammer, and so on.

Amanda Walker

According to my own research so far:

The categorization of the "inverted" (one-point-down) pentagram as "evil" vs. the "upright" (one-point-up) pentagram as "good" originates in the writings of Eliphas Levi in the 19th Century, most notably the works "The History of Magic" and "Doctrine and Ritual of Transcendental Magic." He is also the originator of the now-infamous goat's head glyph. Eliphas Levi (actually the pen name of Alphonse Louis Constant, a French Catholic deacon) was one of a number of writers who constituted a reaction against 18th century rationalism. His works have had a lasting effect on French magical traditions, and were instrumental in the development of the Tarot as a serious tool of Hermetic magic, despite its humble beginnings in Gypsy fortune-telling.

Levi was the first Hermetic writer to assign an elemental (or perhaps more accurately, alchemical) meaning to the pentagram, which before him had been used principally as a protective glyph denoting the five wounds of Christ (and as such, occurs in both orientations in Gothic cathedrals and cloisters all across Europe)).

Now, I would be more than interested to hear about evidence that contradicts the derivation I give above; however, I have yet to come across any "evil" connotations of the pentagram, or the orientation thereof, that predate Eliphas Levi (who lived from 1810-1875).

This is not to say that his analysis is nonsense--far otherwise, in fact. If you apply his elemental attributions to the points of the figure, the orientation does indeed profoundly affect the resulting connotations. However, it is a mistake to believe that this interpretation is any more "traditional" than 150 or so years, or for that matter particularly pagan. It has, however, been picked up by modern paganism, and has been (comparitively speaking) neglected by modern hermeticism, which has focused primarily on the Tarot and the Kabbalah.

Amanda Walker

Amanda Walker (amanda@intercon.com) writes:

Eliphas Levi is the earliest source I have yet found in European esotericism which gives the points of the star an elemental attribution

This was probably derived from Tycho Brahe's *Calendarium Naturale Magicum Perpetuum...*, the ancestor of *Liber 777* and many other works of that sort. Although the *Calendarium* does not show a pentagram marked with the elements, the row "Quinarius denari ..." shows all the details: a pentagram with human body imposed, Hebrew for YHSVH, and the elements associated. That's 1582 e.v. Other, later sources also have the material. Looking to either the *Picatrix* or the writings of Petro de Abano might turn up earlier European usage.

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In the book *Symbols of the Prehistoric Mesopotamia* by Beatrice Laura Goff, the pentagram is shown and related to the Uruk (Biblical) period of Mesopotamian civilization (3500 B.C. > E.). This sign is located on potsherds in the location of Uruk (near the mouth of the Gulf), and is in the company of signs relating to the beginning of written language. In the book *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art* by E. Douglas Van Buren, we find the Pentagram belonging to the archaic period Uruk IV, and more frequently on Jemdet Nasr (3100-2900 B.C. > E.) and Proto-Elamite tablets (3000-2500 B.C.E.). The title suggested for the sign is revealing, UB, 'explained as "the very sign used in the royal inscriptions to designate, in a somewhat obscure title, a power extending to the 'four corners of the world". These points are the four corners of the compass.

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To say "the pentagram was considered an evil symbol by the Christians" is a little ... well, general.

I haven't searched the whole corpus of Christian literature, and tallied up all the mentions of pentagrams - good and pentagrams - bad, but I would like to point out that (a) the pentagram occurs in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," and not as an evil symbol; (b) the pentagram was often regarded as emblematic of the Five Wounds of Christ; and (c) the pentagram was not an evil symbol for Pythagoreans, and there was a strong current of admiration, in Christian tradition (though not a unanimous one), for "noble pagans" -- Pythagoras, Plato, various Stoics, Plotinus, and so on. A good example of the ambivalence in Christian tradition toward

writers and thinkers is Dante's treatment of Virgil.

Can anyone come up with a specific text originating from the first thousand years of Christianity denouncing the pentagram as an innately evil symbol? I wouldn't be surprised, myself, if the first occurrence of such texts was some time within the past two centuries. Or five centuries.

--LeGrand

The pentagram was used early on by the Xian church (particularly in the East). Their use was, of course, point-up.

The inverted cross was also used by the Xians. It is known in traditional mythology as St. Peter's cross. Peter did not believe he was worthy enough to die in the same way that Jesus had, so he begged to be crucified upside-down. (Or so the legend goes.)

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There is, of course, the "standard" pagan reply: the five points represent the five elements. It is "positive" if it is point-up because it represents the mastery of mind/spirit over mere matter. It is "negative" if worn point down because spirit is immersed in or ruled by the physical rather than mental plane. (CUE: End of standard reply.)

Now for some other possibilities that are somewhat less standard. The five stages of humanity (or the five stages of life, if you prefer) are represented. Speaking purely in terms of age, there are: Babyhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, Middle Age, and Old Age. In terms of life occurrences, there are: Birth, Initiation, Love, Repose, and Death.

In Egypt the five-pointed star represented the underground womb. To the pagan Celts, the pentagram was particularly associated with Morrigan, the underground goddess.

To Hermetic magicians (and many others now), the five-pointed star represented Man in the Microcosm, with his head at the top, hands out to the sides, and legs below. His genitalia were in the center of the pentagram.

To Christians (yes, they managed to get ahold of this symbol, too) the pentagram represented the five wounds of Christ at the crucifixion.

In ancient Greece, the Pythagoreans called this symbol the Pentalpha, since it is five capital 'A' figures interlaced.

As for the point-down pentagram being "evil", there are a couple of different answers to that. Yes, modern culture has led to the popular notion that this is an evil symbol. However, It is also a representative of the Horned God. Yes, it looks like a goat's head. The Horned God's most common five forms are represented by the points: human, goat, ram, stag and bull.

Given the Christian propensity to turn the Horned God into the Devil, is it any wonder that this seems to be associated with the Christian Devil?

I understand that this symbol also has some Qabalistic significance, but I am pitifully ignorant of the ways of the Qabala. Perhaps someone else could enlighten you about that part of it.

Another important thing to remember is that the pentagram is a unicursal figure. That is, it can be drawn without lifting pen/cil from paper. It also means that each of the five (or more) things that are represented are *irrevocably* connected to one another, unless the line is broken. No one thing is any stronger or better than the other - they are all dependent upon one another.

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Here are two books you might enjoy reading, or just looking through:
Rudolf Koch's THE BOOK OF SIGNS, 1930, reprinted by Dover since 1955;
Clarence P. Hornung, HANDBOOK OF DESIGNS AND DEVICES, 1932, reprinted by Dover since 1946. (Dover Books has many beautiful books on design.)

Koch, re PENTAGRAM: "The pentagram, a five-pointed star drawn with one stroke of the pen: this sign belongs, as do many others depicted here, to the most primitive of mankind, and is certainly much older than written characters. Signs of this kind are quite the most ancient human documents we possess. The pentagram has had several different significations at different times in the history of man. The Pythagoreans called it the pentalpha, and the Celtic priests the witch's foot. It is also Solomon's seal, known in the Middle Ages as the goblin's cross. It also represents the five senses; the male and female principles are also conveyed by the arrangement of the five points. Amongst the druids it was the sign of Godhead, and to the Jews it signified the five Mosaic Books. This sign was also popularly believed to be a protection against demons, and, by analogy,

a symbol of safety. It is believed too to be the emblem of happy homecoming, whence its employment as an amulet. In ancient times it was a magic charm amongst the people of Babylon."

Hornung, re PENTAGRAM: "The five-pointed star... As a continuous interlacement,... it is called the pentacle, or pentagram, and becomes an important element in the history of magic and witchcraft, with many mystic interpretations. It is an ingenious development used in ancient times by the Pythagoreans and others as the pentalpha, an emblem of perfection. This sign was also regarded as a protective fetish, and was frequently worn as an amulet."

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The pentagram has meant many things to many different people/groups throughout history, including strangely enough within the Catholic church itself, during various parts of the middle ages it was seen as a symbol of truth, you can find indications of this in some Arthurian legends (i don't recall the details, however one of the knights in one of the accounts was supposed to have a shield with the symbol).

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Gawain, in the medieval verse-tale SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.

I strongly recommend J.R.R. Tolkien's wonderful translation, which retains much of the Old English alliterative form.

Stanzas 27-28:

Then they brought him his blazon that was of brilliant gules
with the pentangle depicted in pure hue of gold.
By the baldric he caught it and about his neck cast it:
reight well and worthily it went with that knight.
And why the pentangle is proper to that prince so noble
I intend now to tell you, though it may tarry my story.
It is a sign that Solomon once set on a time
to betoken Troth, as it is entitled to do;
for it is a figure that in it five points holdeth,
and each line overlaps and is linked with another,
and every way it is endless; and the English, I hear,
everywhere name it the Endless Knot.
So it suits well this knight and his unsullied arms;
for ever faithful in five points, and five times under each,

Gawain as good was acknowledged and as gold refine'd,
devoid of every vice and with virtues adorned.

So there
the pentangle painted new
he on shield and coat did wear
as one of word most true
and knight of bearing fair.

First faultless was he found in his five senses,
and next in his five fingers he failed at no time,
and firmly on the Five Wounds all his faith was set
that Christ received on the cross, as the Creed tells us;
and wherever the brave man into battle was come,
on this beyond all things was his earnest thought:
that ever from the Five Joys all his valour he gained
that to Heaven's courteous Queen once came from her Child.
For which cause the knight had in comely wise
on the inner side of his shield her image depainted,
that when he cast his eyes thither his courage never failed.
The fifth five that was used, as I find, by this knight
was free-giving and friendliness first before all,
and chastity and chivalry ever changeless and straight,
and piety surpassing all points: these perfect five
were hasped upon him harder than on any man else.
Now these five series, in sooth, were fastened on this knight,
and each was knit with another and had no ending,
but were fixed at five points that failed not at all,
coincided in no line nor sundered either,
not ending in any angle anywhere, as I discover,
wherever the process was put in play or passed to an end.
Therefore on his shining shield was shaped now this knot,
royally with red gules upon red gold set:
this is the pure pentangle as people of learning
have taught.

Now Gawain in brave array
his lance at last hath caught.
He gave them all good day
for evermore as he thought.

-- Raven (JSingle@Music.Lib.MATC.Edu). [All standard disclaimers apply]

...in Great Britain, the inverted pentagram is the sign of a second level
Wiccan Student in the Gardnerian Tradition. Because of the fear frenzy of
the Fundamentalists, in this country another symbol is used. And the

symbols may be very different in different parts of the world as to how to identify either a Satanist or a second level Gardnerian Student.

...the symbol is a reminder to face the evil/dark and nastiness within or it will rise up and control you.

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Well, according to my tradition, four of the points represent the elements of Earth, Air, Fire & Water. The fifth point represents the spiritual. Now, reference to up or down...Up is representative of the higher spiritual plane, down is representative of inner spirituality.

...the pentagram as a symbol for Satanism was a figment of some fundies' collective imaginations then adopted by Satanists. To lend further credence, it was pointed out that a point-down pentagram looked a little like a goat's head, said to be a Satanic creature. Actually, this reference first showed up centuries ago when the Roman Catholic Church attempted to slander Pan and His followers.

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Joseph of Aramathia came to the Isle of angels after the crucifixion of Christ. There are those who believe that Jesus himself came to Britain and was taught by the Druids during his early adulthood.

Regardless the people of Britian saw remarkable religious similarities between their own beliefs and those of the EARLY christians. There is proof that the British practiced both religions side by side.

Later when the Roman church was in ascendancy they started to subvert other religious practices. For some reason, whether to show displeasure of Rome, or whether the Church itself initiated the practice, those who where against the church inverted their crosses and since the Pentagram was worn with it it also was inverted.

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There are a lot of pagans out here that use an inverted pentagram as a banishing/grounding pentagram that aren't involved in satanism at all.

Both the upright and inverted pentagram are tools and nothing more. They are symbols of a way that ritual and magick and energy are moved. How

each person or group of people chooses to *use* such symbols is the key issue. If you use an inverted pentagram for "Black Magic" (Ghod how I hate that term. Esecially since Black Magick for me designates only those workings done in the dark phase of the moon.) then it is the energy that you focus and the direction that *you* choose that makes them "evil" in symbology.

Hawke
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The pentagram itself is an extremely ancient symbol, with various forms and significances in different cultures -- much like the cross.

The magical pentagram as used in a ritual which projects it to the four quarters is a relatively recent innovation, apparently no older than the Golden Dawn (or possibly Eliphas Levi.) The ritual authors derived the symbol from older sources, probably including the Pythagoreans, and built the ritual from it and other materials, such as a Jewish night prayer. This is the form in which the pentagram is used by modern paganism, which employs numerous variations on the Golden Dawn pentagram ritual as the basic framework for circle work.

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nagasiva

I heard this symbol is used in a "spiritual communications" in certain forms of satan worship. The person sits in the middle of the circle while "praying" to the spirits who can then "sit" on each of the five points of the "star".

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...The inverted pentagram has always represented a variety of things, as do the upright and skew pentagrams. Aside from prudery in symbolism apparently originating in the 19th century, the abuse of this symbol by associating it with evil or "Devil Worship", in the Christian sense, is an act of religious intolerance on a level with racism in Nazi Germany. Use of the inverted pentagram by non-Christian Satanists is harmless, no different from use of the swastika by the Theosophical Society. Hate groups have attempted to use the inverted and other orientations of the pentagram to engage authorities in the suppression of non-Christian religious organizations, much as the Proctor and Gamble logo has been associated with irrelevant interpretations by certain

Christian groups selling competitive products door-to door.

Accordingly, the pentagram in its various orientations is an appropriate symbol of solidarity with victims of bigotry. Wear it proudly and display it in your windows. If that had been done with the Hexagram in 1930's Germany, 9 million Jews, Gypsies and Masons might have been saved from untimely and horrible death. Avoidance of this symbol may result in: A. tacit endorsement of abuse of minorities for financial and other gain. B. encouragement of children to adopt this symbol as a justification for destructive behavior.

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1) Many Satanists don't wear an inverted cross. They have no use for that symbol, which has nothing whatsoever to do with our religion or philosophy.

2) The Pentagram has no "right side up" or down orientation. It's an almost circular symbol, which can be used one-point-up, one-point-down, one-point-right, one-point-left, or askew. There are some Pagan and Wiccan folk who use what you call the "inverted" pentagram as a symbol of their initiation. There are some Satanists who use the pentagram in other ways than what you call "inverted."

My personal use is one-point-down, for reasons based in the discussion of symbolism in the Temple of Set's Crystal Tablet. It has nothing to do with any Pagan, Wicca, or Christian use of a similar symbol.

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Supposedly, a "good" pentagram has only one point up, and the "inverted" pentagram, which is associated with "evil" devils and demons (!) is hated. "White" witches are quick to point out that the pentagrams they wear around their necks are not "evil" etc, and even Anton LaVey (founder, Church of Satan) says that he uses the two point up pentagram to represent man's carnal (vs "spiritual" nature), which is basically correct. What he does not mention is that the two point up pentagram is older and much more common. The one point up pentagram was basically something that came along with the "Wicca" movement via Gerald Gardner et al; in other words, it is recent and invented by people born and raised Christian. Fact. Well, looking back through historical stuff, the theme of 5 things is extremely common and is associated with the Goddess (ref. The White Goddess by Robert Graves: well known book). Looking through certain art, you can also find a pentagram, which is always 2 points up.

You can go to your library and get any book of Tantrik art to see this. Freemasons use it to mean "man", which is also easily verifiable. The point is, the pentagram goes way back and is common, perhaps because the image and general shape is common in nature: many animal faces have this shape and plants do as well, but only if it has 2 points up. Both of the referenced mystical groups are older than the "white witches" and the movement in general. This is something you should be able to research and see for yourself pretty easily.

...as I said, the two easiest groups that use this and are known to be old, etc, are the Freemasons and Tantriks, which are groups not historically related and have different origins and traditions, but both use a two-point up pentagram. The Freemasons call it the Eastern Star, and you can probably get a graphic file of this off of the internet (so you don't even have to go to the library). Check "Alt.Freemasonry" (I think it is) and maybe someone can give you pointers; you can also see on that group Freemasons being accused of using the "devil's sign", which is funny, since Freemasons have been along much longer than the Church of Satan! For the Tantrik stuff, most any art history book about it will have at least one pentagram in there: I have seen them either in "symbols relating cosmos" pictures or chakra diagrams. Since most books draw on basically the same materials, I cannot recommend a specific one. Just look in the computer under "Tantrik art" or "art Tantrik".

Brendan <whitedev@bigdipper.umd.edu>

The Pentagram business is a *convention*, not an absolute. But it's been intentionally built up and reinforced over the last 20-30 years as the American Wiccan/NeoPagan movement has evolved. Most people are taught that the upright star represents the human "Spirit": an individual person in charge of their own destiny, and unifying the other Four Elements within him/herself. So far, so good, right?

In the late 1960's, a whole bunch of books on Witchcraft, Magick, and Occultism came out. There was a big "fad" thing happening there for awhile, probably due to the influence of the Counterculture. Enquiring minds wanted to know: Is there magic(k)? Does it work? How can I do it? Will I go to Hell for doing it? And suddenly there were all these books.

In this era, Anton LaVey started the Church of Satan and published "The Satanic Bible". Obviously his Church needed a logo, and so he turned to the works of Eliphas Levi, the 19th-century French Occultist. Levi lived in a repressive time and place (he was actually a Catholic priest) and got his writings past the censors by making a big, bold distinction between Good and Evil. It is Levi's famous engraving of "Baphomet" which became

the Official Satanist Logo: modified and somewhat updated to include the Inverted Pentagram emphasizing the Horns of Satan.

But in Wicca, as founded by Gerald Gardner, the Inverted Pentagram was used as a symbol of the Second Degree, which treats of the Horned One and his powers of Transformation: Death, Love, and Rebirth. So to Witches (at least from 1949 on) it had a different, more "neutral" meaning. In English practice it is still used as the Second-Degree symbol. (Perhaps in certain ways the Brits tend to be more sensible and less superstitious than we, yes?)

But not here in the USA, oh no! As soon as the inverted-Pentagram Satanic Logo got identified in the public mind with Evil Black Magic(k), those anxious to distinguish Wicca from Satanism made it quite plain that "we" only use the Upright Star. I can't blame the American Craft for this: it was an expedient demanded by the time. (If you think we got "clueless newbies" now, you should have seen what was out there then!)

And so the Upright Pentagram has gone down, over time (but not that much time, really) as the symbol for those whose magic(k) is "Positive" (Good) not "Negative" (Baaaad). As for the Inverse Pentagram -- just try wearing one to a party, especially if you're fifteen years old -- and see how much attention you get! "Eeevil" still equals "Sexy and Dangerous" in our culture; add the "I *am* a Master Warlock" spin and you may *actually* get laid*! So you can understand why the Inverse Pentagram is a big boon to lonely, horny people still in the "Workin' the Bar 101" phase of development. (Anton LaVey certainly did!)

Witches are supposed to be, IMHO, more subtle than that. If you appreciate the distinction between raw fish and sushi you probably giggle at people who wear Inverse Pentagrams. But don't get in their face with it -- for most of them it's legitimate self-assertion, given a culture in which they must wrestle with the Xtian notion that it's "evil" to Just Be Themselves. Sooner or later they may discover more subtle aspects of Magic(k) -- or maybe not, if it really works for them. Meanwhile a strongly-projected (if unspoken) "that's *tacky!*" will usually take care of the "problem".

B*B,
netwitch@panix.com (Balachandra)

...You're confused. It's the *upright* Pentacle that is the "Sign of Man", and it's alchemical symbology, not Masonic. Leonardo de Vinci uses it in his very famous drawing of a Man with his arms and legs outstretched, with the upright Pentacle behind him & framing him. Just my \$.02.

walter5@brewich.com (Walter Five)

Leonardo's famous sketch does **not** contain a pentagram of any description. Check an art history book, or if you have Web access, the upper half of the picture may be found at <http://leonardo.net/> as an inline gif.

The figure is drawn on a superimposed square and circle, **not** a pentagram.

"A beautiful theory, callously murdered by cold, unfeeling facts."

ptrei@acm.org (Peter Trei)

Be it one or two points up, the position is really irrelevant. In both Pagan/Wiccan and Satanist traditions it depends on which way that the Pentagram is drawn. If being used for the positive or "gathering" means, it is traditionally drawn clockwise. If being used to negate or "deminish", it is drawn counterclockwise. However, the fact that one way is "evil" while the other is not is up to one's own perception. Throughout the ages, many religious symbols have been used to serve one's own means and by that they tend to have been corrupted.

Blessed Be!!

relo@cybernetics.net (Melusine)

More Star Stuff &c. (Long Post):

1. Freemasonry

In Masonic tradition, the upright interlaced Pentagram is sometimes used to symbolize the sitting Master of the Lodge. This is an old tradition, very popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in English Lodges. It has fallen into disuse here here in the US, possibly because of the association of the Pentagram with Occultism. (Masons have enough trouble with gratuitous prejudice without using a symbol popularly thought to be a "negative" one.)

However, I have seen several antique Past Master's Jewels (presented by the Lodge to the outgoing Master on his retirement from the East) in which the Interlaced Pentagram is superimposed upon the Compasses, with the traditional carved moonstone at its center. It may also be noted that a "hidden" aspect of the symbolic Pentagram exists in the 72o angle of the open Compasses as seen in Freemasonry's standard logo. This is intentional.

As for "Eastern Star": I am a member of the Order of Eastern Star, a Masonic Womens' Organization, (founded in the 1860's) whose symbol is the five-pointed Star (*not* the Interlaced Pentagram). Each Star Point represents a heroine of Biblical lore (three from the Old Testament and two from the New) who exemplifies a Feminine Mystery. For example, I sit at the Point of Esther (aka Ishtar, Isis, Astarte) and represent Her -- quite a treat for a Goddess-worshipper like me.

In most State Jurisdictions, the "Eastern Star" is seen with two points up, something the National organization refuses to change despite what I imagine can be rather nasty pressure from local Fundamentalist groups. In New York State (where the O.E.S. was founded) however, our Star has *always* been seen with one point upright. I don't know why the others originally chose the reversed Star, but I'll ask someone from out-of-State sometime and perhaps then be able to report on it.

netwitch@panix.com (Balachandra)

The version I know of the logic behind this goes:

Pentagram points= Head(Spirit)

 L.ARM (Air) R.ARM (Fire)

 L.Leg (Earth) R.Leg (Water)

And is symbolic of the triumph of Mind over man/the elements. (good)

The Inverse pentagram being symbolic of the domination of the spirit/will/mind by the earthly forces, Lust,Greed,etc. (bad)

Therefore 'Whites' seeking to control their bodily urges wear the 'good' type. 'Blacks' glorifying and magnifying their bodily urges wear the 'bad' type.

Crowleys view was that neither version was intrinsically good or bad but was merely a classic magical instance of an Aspect. Each should be used according to the object of the ritual/talisman or the forces being invoked. Example: When invoking Elementals to actually DO work a base up point down should be used and when invoking Intelligences to answer questions, offer guidance etc. then a point up pentagram should be used.

Malcolm@celtic.demon.co.uk (Malcolm Grandis)

The single-point-up pentagram in fact appears in the ancient verse about Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight. Sir Gawaine carries a shield with a pentagram emblazoned on it like a coat of arms. The poem states that the pentagram symbolizes, among other things, the five senses, the five fingers, and the five Knightly Virtues (Courtesy, Chastity, Generosity, Brotherly Love, and Pity -- interestingly, courage is not included).

rosanna@ibm.net (Rosanna E. Tufts)

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see <http://www.hollyfeld.org/~tyagi/nagasiva.html> and call: 408/2-666-SLUG!!!

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